

ADVENTURES OF A TAOIST MASTER
ENCOUNTERS WITH THE PARANORMAL
A MEMOIR

by

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ADVENTURES OF A TAOIST MASTER

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

[COPYRIGHT](#)

[DISCLAIMER](#)

[JUST A MEMORY](#)

[INTRODUCTION](#)

[1.THE ORIENTAL MISTERY OF 'TCHAY'](#)

[2.A FAKIR IN HUNGARY](#)

[3.A SHAMAN IN VIENNA](#)

[4.THE PSY ATTACKER](#)

[5.OPENING THE THIRD EYE](#)

[6.THE TREE - HUGGERS OF THE ZUERICHBERG](#)

[7.OVER THE EDGE](#)

[8.THE IGOROT PEOPLE](#)

[9.THE CLOSED-DOOR-STUDENT](#)

[10.THE GHOSTWRITER](#)

[11.HAVE MASTER, WILL TRAVEL](#)

[12.THE AMULET - KILLER](#)

[13.THE CURSE OF THE TWIN - TOWERS](#)

[14.CHAMBRE D'AMOUR](#)

[15.THE GHOSTS OF WW II](#)

[16.THE MULTI - ALIEN GAZEBO](#)

[17.THE FLOATING HOUSE](#)

[18.THE HAUNTED BANK](#)

[19.THE CASE OF THE MURDERED MAID](#)

[20.NOON TIME GHOSTS](#)

[21.DUENDE RESETTLEMENT](#)

[22.13 CHAIRS](#)

[23.THE RED COMMODE](#)

[24.OUR WHITE LADY OF THE POSO NEGRO](#)

[25.BLOOD AND SPIKES](#)

[26.THE VIVISECTED VILLA](#)

[27.ATTACK OF THE TREE - DEMON](#)

[28.HAPPY BONES AND MARIACHI](#)

[29.DEEP END](#)

[GLOSSARY](#)

[ACKNOWLEDGMENTS](#)

[THIS BOOK](#)

[ABOUT FR.AXEL](#)

[CONTACT FR.AXEL](#)

[CONSULTATIONS](#)

[IF YOU LIKE](#)

[OTHER BOOKS BY FR.AXEL](#)

These are my memoirs. The memoirs of a Taoist Master in the II. Generation. This is my life, as I remember it. When I die, I want that somebody, somewhere, reads these lines. Just to think a little about me. And then my name will fade to grey, then crumble to sparkling dust. And then vanish.

INTRODUCTION

During my twenty years of ministering to the public, I met up with some supernatural beings. The paranormal manifestations I have been able to manage (more or less), were sometimes benevolent, at other times malevolent. Like my shamanistic colleagues all over the world, these encounters with the netherworld happened against my will. I was not looking out for them. They found me, whatever that means. Seeking out voluntarily meetings with ghosts and demons, is a sign of utmost stupidity. Not only is it a free ticket to the psychiatric ward, it also means fooling around with dark forces beyond anybody's control. If some fancy ghostbuster on TV claims otherwise - let me tell you: I was out there and came back. That's more than sufficient for me.

Evil - and I clearly talk in this book about PHYSICAL EVIL - is not designed for entertainment purposes. I may at times sound medieval here, but that's the Taoist talking. I remember a conversation I once had with the Catholic Primate of Hungary, his Eminence Paskai Laszlo in Esztergom. He told me in 1992, that until recently, the curriculum of every Catholic Priest included the practice of exorcism. That means, every Father of the Catholic faith had at least a basic knowledge on how to deal with demons and the Great Seducer himself.

And this concept is even more pronounced within the Taoist religion, where demons, ghosts and sprites are formed out by an overall animistic concept. In 2008, I had a very interesting talk with the eminent Grand Shinto Master, the Head Priest of Heian Jingu Shrine in Kyoto. Our topic was the animistic well, from which sprang in succession Taoism and Shintoism. Thereby we also touched the subject of 'evil' in Shintoism. Demons, demonic possessions, curses and blessings play an important material role in the daily ministrations of a Shintoist priest.

The memoirs collected in this edition, have occurred in exactly the way, I describe them herein. Critics may want to differ on this point, but I put the stories down as I (subjectively) experienced them at that juncture in time and space. Sorry about that - but I was not alone when those things happened. Many participants witnessed the same paranormal activities as I did. (So you guys in the white uniforms have to put a lot more people away.)

Before we embark on our journey into mystery, let me allow to clarify the notion Taoist 道士. A Taoist can live in a monastery with other monks. Or he can be a 'house-and-hearth' Taoist 法師.

The Taoist under which I studied most of the time, is such a homey Master. GrandMaster Wong Seng Tian is a very generous, very supportive person. He cared so much for me, fostering me when I had no shelter, no food, no hope. I will always be grateful to him and his family, especially to his elegant wife Natasha.

I have taken some liberties in this book with names and places, where I deemed it necessary to protect a person's privacy. Content and context have not been altered.

So - having this out of the way - let us start our magical mystery tour...

...at the beginning. When I was young, I was a strange boy.

In the summer of 1972, we stayed in Romania at the Black Sea coast. Near our residence was the summer palace of the late dictator Nicolae Ceausescu. During those hot summer days he was still tolerable. We talked sometimes to elderly ice cream vendors, who took upon them the long journey from Transylvania (yes, Chateau Bran) to the Black Sea tourist spots. What they earned during the tourist season, sustained a family in the Carpathian mountains for the rest of the year.

On a scorching day, around 10 am, my six-year-old sister set out on an inflatable pool floater. Carried by torrent out into the Black Sea, my stupid sister (she had been forewarned) was completely oblivious of her predicament. The situation was bad, because there were no lifeguards around. Communism.

As my pals told me later: "All of a sudden you turned a whiter shade of pale. You didn't talk to us anymore. You just stood there on the beach. Motionless. Scanning the surf rolling in. Suddenly, as if being bitten by a tarantula, you jumped into the water, for no obvious reason. There was nothing there. Nothing on the horizon. The sun burnt down us. And we asked mom for ice cream money. You swam, and swam until you stopped at something out there. Far away. Then you approached the beach, a floater trailing behind you. Your little sister onatop the floater. Only later did it dawn on us, that you probably saved her life. Drifting out to open sea with the fast current underway." I never told my parents.

Another incident is still vivid on my mind. Some years later. I skate down on my board on a hilly street, similar to San Francisco. My speed is tops. But it gives me not much leverage for control. Right in front of me pops up a junction. Here my street connects with three other streets in a kind of valley. On the left and right terraced apartments. On the left is a balcony, where a lady waters her flower garden. Out of nowhere appear 3 cars. All at the same time. They are just there. Silence. No sound. I speed directly into 3 converging vehicles before me.

My speed is so high - I can only crash. In my mind I see blood, bone splinters and a twisted head, with cervical vertebrae sticking out. Only seconds to my death. What now happened is beyond belief: I am lifted softly from my skateboard into the air, all-out serenity, tranquility. I somersault backwards in space and time. Three seconds into the past. I land on my two feet as if somebody had put me down gently onto the tarmac. On eiderdown pillows. The lady gardener to my left had dropped her watering pot. Water had splashed over the railing of the balcony, dripping down onto the front lawn. She still covers her face. Slowly she removes her hands, perhaps expecting the worst. Then a wide smile spreads over her and she says to me over the railing: "I really thought you were a basket case. Really. I'll never forget, what I've just witnessed. Unbelievable. You flying salto mortale backwards through the air. Your skateboard just stopped rolling. Like that. A miracle!"

1. THE ORIENTAL MYSTERY OF 'TCHAY'

I hate my life. I work as an orderly in the geriatric ward of a nursery home. Working hours are from 6 AM to 6 PM. It's the 80s, and I am just out of senior high. I pay my way through night school. I major in psychology, counseling psychotherapy and naturopathy. I have been rejected by the government-run medical schools. Not good enough. No connections to get a stipend. Too poor to study medicine in some godforsaken country, somewhere at the end of the world. Just getting through to my first corpse. After some time, they fire me. Not good enough to wipe mom's and pop's dirty behind.

After my fiasco, I run a private ambulant nursing service in Cologne. My job is to place freelancing nurses & murses (male nurses) with (hopefully) loaded patients. In those days the medicard insurer did not pay for ambulant nursing. I had cute nurses at my disposal, mostly from Poland and Hungary. In their early twenties. I am still not sure, but I think some of our freelancing girls had a fling with our elder male patients. I suspected them of performing some 'erotic dances', which turned septuagenarian skeletons into springy skirt chasers. Both nurse and patient were happy: "Do you here me, laddy ? Sent over the little Polish, yeahh, the stacked one! Now!" Some like it hot.

The proprietor of the ambulant nursery biz was my good buddy Harvey from the town of Friedberg, where Elvis once lived. Just around the corner. Harvey sits in front of me in naturopathy class; attending like me professional college in Cologne. He sports a shiny pate and wears a Trotzky beard. Mucho mojo anarcho. He pats his whiskers: "The chichichicks love mymy coool be-be-beard, even when I amam follically challenged." He continues: "I am actually a jazz musician by profession. My mother lives in Friedberg and I am half-German/half-American. I was raised in a brothel and learned to lick pussy from a very early age. No difference playing the pussy or blowing the horn." Harvey has difficulties to articulate himself clearly. Since childhood he suffers from stuttered speech syndrome. Being impaired in this way, he turned it into his advantage for connecting with women: "Because I look so puny and mysterious with my 'weird beard', the girls in the brothel took pity on me. I was so thin and fragile, but my manhood was always ready. They took me in, like a randy bird with broken wings. With eleven years my sperm was ready and I had to wear a preservative. I was happy. Later my nannies gave me samples of whiskey and cigarettes. I am a smoker. I smoke a lot."

Harvey invites me later to his 'swedish sauna salad bar'. He operates - after he lost his job in the hospital - a salad bar for guests of the sauna/massage parlor of his pal Knort, near the Phantasialand in Bruehl. Harvey elaborates: "Due to the G.I.'s coming into the bordello, I came into contact with jazz music. I started playing the horn. I was a 'cool cat'. I joined several bands touring the American clubs all over Europe. That was ho-ho-hot. One night in Frankfurt, we were all sitting in a limousine. Making the rounds at the clubs. Being in a good mood, one of the guys said: "Hey, Harv, my man, blow that horn!" I said: "Yeah! Man! Cool Man!" I set up the mouthpiece. Powered up. Blowing up - for the cool notes. Then...then it ha-ha-happened. Our car gained more speed. I am in the backseat with my horn. Ready to blow out. Heavy, man. Jupp, the driver ran over a dead dog in the street. At 12 midnight. The wheels bouncing back, pushing the horn against my teeth. I bumped my head on the roof of the limousine. Instead of blowing notes, I blew teeth. My front teeth. They found them later, whilst cleaning the car."

"My career as a jazz musician was over. I learned a new trade: nursing. I became a mu-mu-murse". Harvey punctuates his sad tale by removing his set of false front teeth. He places the artifact carefully near the freshly prepared salad bowl for tomorrow's swedish sauna guests.

Harvey and I attend a seminar on 'foot reflexology zones'. The lecturer is the naturopathic headmaster of our college, the eminent Heinrich Todebusch aka 'Henry Deathbush'. He is a bear of a man, rough, uncut and direct to the point. Before his career really took up, he worked the flower

markets in Cologne. His personality is still that of a flower merchant. His hands are big, callused. Yet not without sensitivity.

Harvey is fascinated: "HP Todebusch intrigues me. He knows what he is doing. I also wa-wa-want to become a famous naturopath." It is Harvey's first encounter with our headmaster, but not for his girlfriend. She is a British nurse and works the meat-market in one of the prestigious local emergency hospitals. The very same which fired Harvey not so long ago. She has an interesting tale to tell:

"You know, once my husband and I took a lease on a hotel in the centre of Wermelskirchen (Bergisches Land). Business was not so good and we lost a lot of money. Later I went back to work in the emergency ward, my husband back to professional boxing. Every month, just before midnight, bizarre subdued people shuffled into our hotel. They ordered drinks. They seemed to wait for something to happen. The mien of these people was always sad. I asked my husband: 'Who in hell are those strange people? Where do they come from?' - and always, when we were ready to close up for the night."

And Harvey's girlfriend continues: "As I found out later, the moon had to be in a favourable position. The practice of HP Todebusch was just around the corner and the consultation hour was before midnight. Finally, the bell tower of the church chimed out the witching hour. Then the door flew open and a massive figure appeared in the doorway: Henry Deathbush himself with his long, dark coat and hat. He ordered cognac straight up. Then he clapped his hands for attention: "Ladies and Gentlemen. Time for the oak-tree-groove!"

The motley crew stumbled after the naturopathic master out onto the street. They crossed over to the pavement and became assembled in a daisy chain, holding each other's hands. In front of the group stood a big oak tree. The Master intoned with his basso voice: "This oak tree has special healing powers. As you can see, we have a full moon. The lunar powers will pull up the tree sap. This sap is electrically charged - like a magnet. It will swallow your body-toxins and replace them with emanations of sweet lunar benevolence. Let's get into the groove and sway, sway, sway with me, my moon, sway with me."

"Henry Deathbush and his patients began to dance around the oak tree, imbibing the lunar effluences fresh off the oak. And more stuff like that. Really weird. I mean, everybody said the guy is nuts; but, sure, he is a healer and the people like him. And what he does; it helps", the nurse concluded her tale.

According to the nurse's story, the fellowship of the sick unburdened its diabetes, coronary, cancer, etc., right into the lunar-activated oak tree. Deathbush's practice is reminiscent of the infamous Franz-Anton Mesmer [1734-1815] who coined the notion of 'animal magnetism'.

But let us get back to Harvey and me in class. We are surrounded by our female co-eds, who have already opened their towels and massage oils. No smelly feet in the classroom. Master Deathbush says conspirationally: "Tchay!" Everybody seems puzzled. What does that "Tchay" mean for our feet-rubbing group? He continues: "Tchay is what produces changes in the foot. From the foot then the healing can happen in the eyes, heart or pancreas. The old Chinaman discovered that tchay connects the zones on the sole of the foot with certain inner organs of the body. I will demonstrate. Watch carefully."

Master Deathbush approaches a lady, who had been stripped off her delicate footwear. Without a word, the thumb of his right hand presses down into the lao kung point (the sensitive spot below the toes on the sole of the foot).

He delves in so deeply, that the lady's eyes pop out like a frog's. Then in continuance one eye goes up, whilst the other goes down. No sound escapes from this tormented student. He turns around and beams toward the entire class: "You see? - Tchay!"

Now it is my turn. The headmaster approaches me and lectures: "And now I show you another

important point of 'healing tchay' which is but not located on the sole of the foot." His bulk hovers over me. I feel dwarfed by his physical presence and become apprehensive. He grabs my right hand with his paws. His iron thumb - which is impervious to any kind of thorns - bores deep into the gap between my thumb and index finger. "See there ? Tchay" Thanks to Henry Deathbush's oriental wizardry manipulating acupuncture meridians, I will never forget this very 'tchay'!

2. A FAKIR IN HUNGARY

I always wanted to soar up into the skies. Taking a glider plane into a thermal tube and to fly up there with the eagles. This opportunity comes along, when I join our local glider club near Cologne. The open university offers six weekends of 'introduction into glider flying' and I take the course. What starts out as an experiment, becomes a wonderful pastime. The airfield of our club is a flat meadow trimmed short. It runs left smack into a hotel with a pub. The proprietors are our landlords. The rest is breathtaking forest, especially in autumn. 90 % of my flight training consists of wading through cow pies, whilst retrieving alighted planes with my comrades. Then again, kneeling in manure to hook up the readied gliders to the motorized winch. The winch then pulls up the plane from the steel cable underneath the contraption.

Best of all are the training flights with instructor Alvin: Circling inside a thermal, accompanied by a hawk. Stalling the plane, going zero G for a second, dipping the nose and diving into the forest with the afternoon sun behind me.

We have a Hungarian kid in our club. He recommends, that we should go to Esztergom Airport. He would know the guys there, and they are already waiting for us. Esztergom is some 60 kilometres away from Budapest, located at the blue Danube.

On a hot sunny day in July, I drive from Munich to Budapest via Vienna. Around noon I finally find the airstrip on the outskirts of Esztergom. A plain with occasional meadows. Burned by the sun to straw. Treeless. Alvin and his gang had arrived a day earlier. Parking my car at the flight office, I am unprepared for the spectacle which unfolds before my tired eyes: Hungarian soldiers throwing out tables, chairs, washing machines, rugs, pictures with glorious portraits of pilots of the Motherland, drapes, books (cyrillic), uniforms, boots and assorted junk of Russian design. The stuff is thrown onto a huge junkpile, missing my head by fractions of a centimetre. All this is accompanied by merriment and laughter: "Good riddance, you bastards. Rot in hell." Where in devil's name had I landed ? And on the sidelines standing the local pilots, who cheer on the army guys: "Just great!" On this special day in Hungary, the local pilots take back their Airport from the Russian occupants. Finally the Hungarians kick out their Communist masters. All 'friendship military bases' of the Red Army are shut down, the Russians leaving the country in a hurry. Abandoning all the stuff they can't carry with them.. After Jelzin sold out the Motherland in drunken stupor to the new oligarchs.

Not until a few months ago, Hungary was under 'Communist Brotherly Jurisdiction' from Moscow. Despised by the locals, the Red Army lost more and more military respectability, running parallel with the downfall of the iron curtain in Europe. This 'revolution of freedom' started out in East Germany and spread like a deadly fungus all over the Great Bear's satellite states. They all will regret it bitterly: The new occupational army comes with satellite TV, porn and promises of a 'Euro-Horn-Of-Plenty'. In hindsight, those carefree summer days in Esztergom were the last vestiges of a good time in Europe: Full of cash, opportunity, freedom to create and unlimited hope for a better tomorrow.

Starting every day around 5 PM, the paper factory in Sturovo blows off its toxic fumes across the Danube right into Esztergom. I always wonder if its mutagenic factor isn't heavy borderline, formerly orchestrated by the department of Socialist Coordination in Moscow. On a good thermic day, I flew straight into Slovakian airspace, using the smokestacks for uplift. The smoke is so special (imagine an intoxicating cocktail of vomit, rotten fish and foot-cheese), that you have problems operating any kind of flying machine there.

Somehow I missed out on the Papal visit to the Aeroclub in August. The managers knew that the Holy Father would touch down on the plain landing field - but due to security concerns not exactly when. Thus poor John Paul II was baked under a scorching sun, until one of his bodyguards woke up the pilot staff having siesta. His celebration of the holy mass (along with Primate Paskai Laszlo)

inside the Esztergom Basilika, was celebrated in front of mostly empty seats: "We had no time for the Pope. We had to work." Hungarians.

On our last day at the Airport, we want to give something back to our Hungarian hosts. Kind of a farewell-party. We have discussed this project now for some nights -but with no definite action from our side. Then, I find the solution. We will give the Aeroclub members a show, which they will never forget. Thus I remembered my previous yoga-experiments during the 1970s. I was able to contort my body into weird postures, which required skeletal bones of the rubbery kind. Very popular was my 'spider crawler', which was basically moving around on my palms whilst the rest of my body (trunk and legs) were knotted around my neck. This freaked out my relatives upon demonstration. Whilst visiting my friend Anna in Remscheid (near the Roentgen museum), I introduced her father (who was operating a travelling poppet theatre) into the mystery of Yogini power. He suffered from severe backpain. Demonstrating the pretzel-like postures in their living room, I was handed suddenly a 20 Mark bill and was shown to the door. I asked Anna later: "How's your dad's back? Better? Does he practice my special yoga postures for instant pain relief?" She nodded absently and murmured: "I think he is still okay, stopped complaining about his back." Sadly her little brother couldn't join us in our yoga-class of endured bliss, due to the fact that he just broke his arm falling from a neighbour's cherry tree.

During my yoga studies, I also read about walking over hot coals, pulling one's eyeball like Turkish taffy (a non-Newtonian fluid), until the eye ball dangles held only by its optic nerve and putting it right back in (to improve eyesight and beauty), eating food with the anus and excreting the waste materials through the mouth (finely wrapped in green leaves), bathing in piles of broken glass to clean up impure skin and acne vulgaris, scraping the tongue each morning with a wooden spatula 500 times and doing the tree for 48 hours, whilst acolytes collect the droppings and preserve them in flagons for posterity. I finally decide upon just two of these features, namely the 'board' and the 'fakir'. Born was the authentic 'Fakir Show From Egypt'.

I begin to collect all kinds of glass bottles. Then I take a hammer and smash them up into a sharp stew of colored fragments. I transfer the shards into a pail. Next, I begin to train my assistants, fellow club members. We go through the whole routine twice, and they make for fine ringmasters. For our hardworking flight instructor Alvin, I want something special - a real gypsy fiddler, who can press tears from a stone. President Tibor has located an authentic grade 'A' Primas from Transylvania, now residing near Esztergom. The Primas looks like an emaciated Rudolf Valentino, dressed in a socialist suit dating from the Fifties. His favourite is the theme of "Emanuelle", no wonder: He is the proud owner of a collection of Western sex-movies (like Nicu Ceausescu).

Our send-off party is already underway. Our aero-brothers have going a giant cauldron of bubbling spicy fish-stew. The local specialty, brewed over an open camp fire. Shots of palinka (cherry shots) are distributed freely, spontaneous brotherhood ensues. Instant fraternization across language barriers.

Then suddenly, one of the Karoly brothers jumps into the fray. His mustachio bandito quivers. He shouts incomprehensible greetings in Hungarian and shoots off signal flares from raised guns. He is a fast reloader. Fireworks and cherry spirit: "Come back, my comrades-in-flight. Come back next year to our beautiful Aeroclub Esztergom!"

After the consumption of bowls of fish-stew and countless shots of Russian vodka (forgotten by the occupation army?), it is about time for my act. I am being carried into the dining room by my two assistants. Completely wrapped in coarse socialist toilet paper. From head to toe. They stand me up like a broom stick. One aide intones: "Beware! The mummy!" I can't see anything. They even wrapped my eyes. My assistant continues: "Left behind by the Red Army. Found in a crate branded 'Made in Egypt'. Beware. This mummy. What you are about to see is forbidden to the uninitiated. So don't talk about it. Not to anybody. Beware. This mummy!" (I have to admit - he did an excellent job). Then my other assistant begins to push me around in front of the audience.

I am stiff as a board. Finally, my assistant on the right pushes me down, just centimetres from hitting the floor, only stopped by the interlaced hands of the guy on the left. Still stiff as being shock frozen, like some fish finger in ancient Egypt.

Whilst being held upright by one assistant, the other one hurries out of the dining room and fetches a bucket full of prepared glass shards. He passes the bucket around and urges the audience to verify its razor sharp contents. One German guy cuts his index finger, harmless. Now my helper declares: "I will hypnotize this mummy to do my bidding. Right here. In front of you." Then he starts to move his fingers around my wrapped head and mumbles incomprehensible formulas of instant magic. Still being held by the other assistant, he pours the content of the bucket onto the floor. "Now mummy - step into the shards with your bare feet", he commands me. I obey and walk into the sharp glass pieces, careful not to cut up my tendons. The Hungarians are stunned. No blood. "Now it is time to kneel, mummy", one of my helpers intones. Next I kneel - still enwrapped in toilet paper - right down into the shards and grinding them with my bare kneecaps. Still no bleeding from the knees. Good.

The second act begins. My two helpers put up two ordinary chairs in front of the excited audience. Again the guy on the right pushes me, I fall like a log and am caught in time by the guy on my left, gripping again the back of my head. Meanwhile strips of toilet paper have turned loose, but that only adds to the uncanny routine. Now the right guy grips my feet, and together they press me down between the two chairs. I am resting on them only with the back of my head and the heels of my feet. There is no other suspension for my body applied. "Fellow clubmembers, we need a third assistant from the audience. Please. Anybody? Ah, yes. The young lady there! Please, don't be shy. Step right up. Please?", my assistant requests. A Hungarian girl flight student carefully approaches me. Resting suspended in midair between the two chairs. My helpers mumble some important formulas and position the girl right on top of my midriff. Silence. Lo and behold. I carry forth the girl's body weight. Without bending. Without cracking my spine.

Then - applause. The clubmembers go crazy. Now the local palinka is consumed. One of the Hungarians crawls over the dining table, jumps - and crashes with a wet splash somewhere beyond the dirty dishes. Unconscious. They call him 'Bully'. The girl student disembarks from my floating body and is guided back to her chair.

My act is over and the Gypsy king enters, centre stage. He is wonderful. Fiddling away, he tells the Hungaro-German fellowship of endless puszta plains and unrequited love under the stars. Alvin - my flight instructor - nods his approval for this Primas. Delight.

During dawn most of my German comrades have already departed for Cologne and I stay over at the Airport. Somehow I like it here. I ask one of the mustachioed Karoly brothers (who runs the Airport), if it would be possible to fly in Hungary. "Sure, no problem", says Karoly I, and hands me my club-passbook ID. I am the first German to join the crazy Hungarians after WW II. "But you have to go to Esztergom hospital for medical check-up and the fit-to-fly-certificate", he adds. Thus I venture to the socialist hospital. Everything here is free. No charges.

The head nurse is a typical babushka. Socialist stern and sober, she measures my height, my lung capacity, my eyesight and - my brainwaves. She connects me to an EEG device by putting a rubber contraption over my skull. Wires link me up to a plastic container, which suspiciously looks like a Red Army food storage container. Some military dupperware. I love the Russians. So practical. NASA can't get it up anymore, all rocket engines in the world now 'Made in Russia'. Primitive, but they work all the time. Everywhere. The plotter of the EEG contraption seems so fragile (I mean 'sensitive'), that every motorscooter passing by the window sends tremors across the needles.

The babushka seems unperturbed: "Young man, please relax yourself. Concentrate yourself. Relax now yourself, for the exact measurement of your brainwaves." OK. Whilst the machine hums conspirationally, I concentrate very hard on the writing needles of the plotter. The more I focus, the higher the curves plot. Continuing, I am able to steer the writing needles with my

willpower. "Amazing", the babushka exclaims. I will myself even more, trying to create bigger and bigger peaks on the EEG plotter. Suddenly the needles spin out of control, the curves expose alien brainwave activity here in this examination room. Now the plotter shakes erratically.. Vibrates in a most unusual way. "Stop! Stop! Young man is breaking our device!", the babushka shouts and rips off brutally my rubber headgear. Reproachfully looking my way, she stamps an energetic 'Passed' into my pilot's pass. Her index finger points unmistakably towards the exit. My scalp still itches from that Russian glue, plastered by the babushka over my skull for better 'electrification'. I am officially declared 'fit to fly' in Hungarian airspace.

I decide to conduct one of the other fakir-experiments mentioned above. This time it is 'fire-walking'. At night I start camp-fires on the plain airstrip. I wait for the flames to go down and then lay the charcoals out into a walking carpet. Szepi, the Aeroclub dog, is always by my side. I pull off my socks and step with bare feet into the burning embers. My first walk extends just over ten feet, but I improve over time. Next night I make 20 feet, then 35. Whilst crossing over the hot stuff, I visualize that my feet are cold. Ice cold. It takes some time to get into this state of selfhypnosis. I imagine my feet turn into ice cubes. After 10 minutes, my feet feel so cold, that I long to stamp them into the hottest coals available.

The big event is about to commence. I will demonstrate fire-walking on the airfield. A huge crowd has gathered. It is a mild evening. The smell of burning wood wafts through the air. I am sitting inside my one-man-tent and prepare myself for the ordeal ahead: "Dont' panic. Relax. Remember. You controlled the socialist EEG machine. You are the controller. If you can control that EEG thing, you can walk the coals."

At the onset of crepuscule, I exit from the tent. The glow of the embers contrasts nicely with the rows of Hungarians on both sides of my burning footpath. Rhythmically they chant and operate small sets of animal bones, I had prepared for this event. I enter into a state of 'non-here- but- there'. I open myself up to the fire ahead. I become one with the fire. There is no more separation between me and the spirit of the burning coals. Then I put my left foot forward. Then the right. I am floating over the coals with my bare feet. Suddenly people shake me out of this altered state of consciousness. I can't believe it. I really made it. My feet still attached to my body. No oozing wounds. No blisters. I put on my clothes, enter my car and drive to Vienna. Paul Uccusic is waiting with his drum.

3. A SHAMAN IN VIENNA

On a gray and rainy day, I arrive in Vienna. I had previously enrolled myself at the Viennese open university, to attend a workshop about shamanism. The lecturer is one Paul Uccusic, a direct student of Michael Harner. Prof. Harner became famous for his anthropological research amongst the Jivaro tribe of the Ecuadorian amazon.

With the begin of the 1990s, I receive my B.Sc. in Holistic Sciences. I had studied extensively the work of Moshe Feldenkrais, Milton Erickson and Bandler & Grinder. Yet I feel, that something essential is missing. I can't put my finger on it. In senior high I worked on ecstatic techniques of shamanism as described in Prof. Harner's manual 'The way of the shaman'. The word 'shaman' denotes kinds of witch doctors, operating in the Tunguscan steppes in Siberia. Where it is the prevailing official religion. Shamans exist all over the world, often in the guise of mediums working within an established religious tradition.

The shaman is an expert for entering altered states of consciousness. He is able to travel to the underworld, middle world (our world) and the upper world. Judeo-Christian notions of 'heaven' and 'hell' have no meaning in this world model. Shamans are familiar with the universal concepts of 'good' and 'evil'. They take to the threats of demons and bad ghosts in a very pragmatic way.

I fortify myself in a bakery and enter the lecture hall of the open university (VHS) in the I. Wiener Stadtbezirk. It is devoid of chairs or tables. We are 25 participants from all walks of life. We organize ourselves in a circle with its open end to the leader. We sit on the floor like native american indians at a pow wow. Paul Uccusic introduces himself and his assistants. He explains that over the weekend, we'll learn how to enter and exit certain shamanistic realms, to find solutions for problems in our life or to find healing there. Our group is highly eclectic and consists of ambient music DJs from Munich, social pedagogues from Frankfurt and social workers from Vienna. And a fakir from Hungary.

Uccusic guides us - accompanied by constant drumming - into the spheres of the three worlds. Namely: Lower, middle and upper world. We are taught to fly with our 'spirit form' into certain gates or doorways (like foxholes), in order to gain entry to those dominions. It takes some time to get into the groove of the drummers and shakers, but then you 'are spirited away'. We travel a lot and return back to 'reality', sharing our experiences within the group. I am impressed. Naturally I'd expect differing reports from the participants. But what intrigues me here, are the similarities between the individual's experiences. It is obvious, that the group itself generates some kind of synchronicity (shamanistic reciprocity or ancestral reciprocity) amongst our individual journeys. We share into our experiences mutually, with certain 'fixed archetypes', yet we differ in our personal interpretation of those. Two students are unable to talk, they just weep along, silently.

The next step is to enter the 'dreamworld' of our fellow acolytes. Thus we build two-people teams and try to push the daisies not only from below, but from the realms, too. This is somewhat difficult to achieve, and I receive chaotic images from my female partner. We share amongst us only 40 % of the same content. Other teams report better results.

A big surprise awaits us on the following day, a Sunday. The weather has improved. The sun comes out at last. The atmosphere within our group has also changed. More relaxed and easygoing. People begin to connect. The intensive encounters with the paranormal worlds we had shared the previous day, have removed our 'society masks'. We all feel like tribal members. Tribesmen of the 'Uccusic tribe'.

High Shaman Uccusic says: "You did well yesterday. Therefore we can devote this whole Sunday to advanced soul-retrieval. I had a long talk yesterday with one of our fellows here, who has lost his soul somewhere. He doesn't know WHERE he lost it." 'Heavy shit', I think to myself, 'Obviously this is not meant as a joke. That guy is serious.' And Uccusic again: "Would you like to

help our little fellow here to get back his lost soul?"

I am stunned for the moment. The lost guy is in his twenties and talks like if he is in his seventies. Seems somewhat retarded. Slow motion. Slurred speech patterns. Lack of self expression. 'Reefer addict', goes through my mind. Whatever his problem might have been, we all agree to look out for our new buddy's lost soul. Somewhere down the drain.

Uccusic begins to construct a 'soul-hunting-boat' right there in the seminar hall. Using us participants as living building material. Some fellows constitute the bow, others port and starboard. The rest is utilized to make up the stern. I am one of the guys who paddles in the port of the ghost ship. The 20s/70s guy is placed in the centre. Uccusic: "Please relax . I am here and will guide this crew. Whenever you should feel sick or uncomfortable, just say so. I will take care of you. Then we can stop the journey. We can stop this ghost hunting expedition at any time. OK.?" The guy-who-lost-his-soul just nods indifferently. Then he shrugs his shoulders. Great. The tribal operators at the bow become the 'ghost scouts'. It is their duty, to steer our craft through demonic and turbulent waters. We are already afloat and nobody noticed it.

Uccusic and his team provide the necessary drumming and bamboo-flute background music. Weird. We row all together in the same rhythm with our eyes closed. 'Hive mind', I mumble. After a while, I feel deeply connected with the whole search party, as if we are one single unity. During our boat trip, we have lost our individual personalities. Somewhere along the river of dreamtime.

We row our spirit vessel through uncharted waters. Our 'river of mind' is explored by the frontal scouts: Bends, meandering curves and slipstreams. Then the guys begin to shout out to the rest of the party: "Maelstrom ahead. Row back. Back." The 20s/70s guy starts to moan and shiver. In my mind I see some kind of kraken blocking the progress of our soul-hunter expedition. Uccusic halts his drumming. Excited chatter amongst the 'core-shamanic team': "Stop the boat. Turn around and bring back our friend to the shore. Even when you couldn't retrieve his soul." So bad. So sad. I would have liked to challenge the kraken. If we all had pooled our shamanic resources, we surely would've overcome that monstre. 'The monstre', I think to myself, 'is the guy himself. He always takes a powder, when things get nasty.' The debriefing of our soul retrieval into the nefarious waters, is a complete let down for me. Nothing is explained, nothing is solved. Depressed, I pack my things and drive out of Vienna back to Budapest. At least spring has arrived. The sun is always a reliable companion on the road.

4. THE PSY ATTACKER

What I learned from Paul Uccusick, would soon become very valuable to me. But not in any way I would have expected. I enter our living room. My sister wrapped in a blanket. She shivers. Her lips are blue. My mother is clueless, as to what brought on her bad physical condition. The pallor of my younger sister's skin is chalk white. Just seeing her suffering gives me the creeps. I check her pulse, skin temperature and colour. Definitely symptoms of shock. What puzzles me, is my sister's resignation to her present condition. And being so quiet about it. Normally she displays an aggressive stance and big mouth to all and everything. Calmly I consider her state. Then the image of the 20s/70s guy from the ghost boat pops into my mind. Add to it, that my sister suffered no physical trauma or abuse. That makes me suspicious. She shivers and moans again for five minutes. Then she stops. Then another five of torment. On and on.

I go into shamanic mode and tell her to lie down on the floor. On her back with her feet up. I put several cushions under her legs. I tell my mom to get more blankets. I open the door to the balcony. Let in fresh air. I 'hum a drum', chanting & huffing & puffing, to change my body chemistry. I run on the spot. The plains of the dreamworld. My mother thinks I am going bonkers. Thanks for the confidence in helping your daughter. I go over to my backpack and retrieve my pumpkin seed rattles. Then I sprinkle Charnel's perfume around. Purification.

Now the mists of dreamworld vanish. I see a woman. Kind of a witch. Her face is contorted. The witch woman curses somebody. This somebody is my sister. Her teeth are slightly bared. 'Venomous', pops into my altered mind. I begin to dance around the supine body of my sister. For some time. Wave after wave of pulsing venom is thrown against the shaking body of my sibling. Next, I visualize a golden repellant sphere around my sister's corpus. Like a golden bubble, pulsing and rejecting the constant psychic attacks of the witch woman. I am able to see it with my third eye open. Because that's what those pulsations are. Psychic attacks from a person unknown. After 15 minutes, I stop and whisk away the black, obnoxious fabrics which suddenly appear in my inner time: "Like fat spiderwebs", I mumble. Still engulfed in dreamtime, I peek at my sister's body out of the corners of my eyes. I detect physical changes - her rate of forced breathing slowed down, skin colour rosy. Good. It works.

Sensing a change in the former sulphuric atmosphere in the living room, I ask my sister: "How do you feel?" "Better", she responds subdued. Then: "As if some heavy weight has been lifted from me." I put away my rattles, wash my face and drink a cup of coffee. I am exhausted. But mighty proud of what I've achieved: 'Vienna has paid off'. One hour later, my sister appears coherent and tells the following story: My sister is in love with a man. He is managing a chain of supermarkets. His mother always hated my sister, because my sister is not interested to join her in her charismatic Christian community. The forte of this charismatic group is doing the 'mind-bender', namely to group-concentrate on a non-believer. This loving and caring mind-fuck attack then 'converts' the heathen to join the fold of their loving mother supreme. In a few months ahead, my sister and her fiancée are supposed to get married. Without the blessing of the queenbee and her coven of Christian fundamentalists.

It is the second time, that I saved my sister's life. Anthropologists tell us that indeed curses can kill. In many tribal societies the belief in magic is so strong and culturally enforced, that witch-doctors are able to kill with a single glare, or with a wish-bone pointed at the victim. The human object of the witch-doctor's wrath, shows all the symptoms of shock and psychic depression. He then dies within the time frame allotted by the tribal accuser.

5. OPENING THE THIRD EYE

My next research project is Taoism. The previous incident of my cursed sister changed my outlook towards the so-called 'paranormal'. Being a sceptic of all un-scientific claims to therapy, I easily denounce and ridicule things, which are not covered by the tag 'scientific'. Yes, I have religion. It's called science. There was a time in senior high, were I openly criticized Joe von Goethe for his psychological understanding of colours. I contrasted Goethe's findings with the physical experiments of Isaac Newton, who was able to split white light via prism into a spectrum of rainbow colours. Goethe played Newton down (who was an avid alchymist himself). Nowadays I consider both sides of the coin: Newton was right and Goethe was right. The former excluded subjective experience from the experiment - the other operated within the boundaries of subjectivity. I decide to give up science for some time. To tell the truth: I am sick of science. Because due to recent experiences (told in this book); my belief into an objective reality 'out there' is shattered.

I turn to philosophy. Carlos Castaneda recommends the works of Edmund Husserl. Thus I studied his 'phenomenology'. Husserl found out, that every act of man to know 'something', brings into creation this 'something' (intentionality). Basically our internal drive to see an 'apple', to taste an 'apple', to classify it as an 'apple', is a *primum movens*, which brings on that thing we call 'apple'. We construct the 'apple' between our modes of objectivity (what is 'out there') and subjectivity (what is inside our mind). What this boils down to is, that for Husserl there is no difference between imagination and reality. Both concepts use the same nervous system. And within man's nervous system both are valid. The body makes no distinction between the inner smell of a cinnamon apple or walking past a showcase displaying a cinnamon apple. Both apple products water one's mouth and change the body chemistry accordingly.

Husserl's philosophy acts as a turning key in my life. It serves me well in providing a framework to integrate my personal encounters with the supernatural. And it also explains schizophrenic behavior: The schizo is not able to make an informed decision about what is imaginary or objective within his actual frame of awareness. From thence on I treated my subjective experiences as valid, as my objective outer ones: If you feel the presence of something paranormal - act as if it is a valid experience. And act toward it as you see fit. If it works out in objective reality - good. If not - do something else. Using this concept as a guiding light, I venture into the realms of Taoism. And land in Switzerland.

Master Mantak Chia 謝明德 offered to teach a course in Taoist alchemy in Zuerich. He learned this discipline from Grandmaster Yi Eng 一雲, whilst staying in Hong Kong. (There he also met his wife Maneewan, who always cooked up delicious seafoods.) GM Yi Eng was an adept of the Complete Perfection School 全真.

During the 1930s, he wandered around in China as a monk, and offered Taoist fortunetelling to the families, in exchange for food and shelter. Tired and disappointed about his failed attempts to find a good Taoist master, Yi Eng crossed over into the Japanese puppet state of Manchuria 滿洲. An inner voice urged him to go on, into the borderlands between China and Korea. He climbed up onto the 2000 metre high Perpetual White Mountain 長白山. There his new teacher was already waiting for him: "I knew you'd finally show up". He then imparted to GM Yi Eng the secret formulae of the inner elixir 內丹術. Food was scarce and the two Taoist adepts made a virtue out of necessity; they stopped eating grains 辟穀. Their body chemistry adapted to this starvation diet and they opened the pores of their skin to assimilate sunbeam chi in careful doses. (I think they had no problems with cancer then. I tried this once with good orange or lemon juice. It worked for some time.)

After he could learn no more, Master Yi Eng walked around in China. He finally settled in the New Territories 新界 in front of Shenzhen 深圳市. He became the local 'uncle doctor' and healed

the sick. Master Chia mentioned to me, that during the 1960s he was very strict. He did not accept any students in shadowboxing 太極拳, nor internal alchemy 內丹術. Despite Master Chia's continued efforts to befriend Yi Eng with gifts and continuous flattering, he was always being dismissed as 'unfit to teach'. Faking indifference and even cruelty towards the young student, he finally accepted Master Chia: "It was gruelling. No food. No drinks. Just endless sets of repetitions. Master Yi Eng insisted always on memorizing his teachings. I was 24/7 on recurse. He criticized. He complained about my stupidity. Never being praised for any achievement. I felt like a dog", Master Chia told me. He later returned to Thailand. GM Yi Eng passed into the Tao in a puff of smoke during the 1970s. He was around 100 years old.

In 1974, Master Chia opened his natural healing centre in Thailand. From the beginning, the established medical community had it in for him. He put all his knowledge about the life force chi into the development of medical tools to heal. Patients received magnetic treatments and his store sold chi-bracelets and chi-blankets. Forced by the Thai authorities to close shop, Master Chia left with his family for New York, Chinatown. That was 1979.

I journey, bathed in balmy winds of springtime, to the Zuerichberg Hotel. It was founded in 1900 by the famous Susanna Orelli. She was a remarkable woman, far ahead of her time. It was her vision, to enable everybody - regardless of social position - to have an affordable holiday time on atop lake Zuerich. The consumption of liquor in any form was strictly forbidden. On weekends families from across the vast Austro-Hungarian Empire (the second largest country after Russia) flocked to the vista of the privileged ones.

It is around 2 AM in the morning when I arrive. I go straight to bed. Somehow I had missed out on one day and expect the lecture to start the following day. Wrong. Waking up at 8 AM, I have a hearty breakfast from the lavish buffet. Enjoying my coffee, I see people milling around the seminar area. "Damn, they are already here for the workshop", I utter. I jump from the table and run to claim a seat near the small stage.

Master Chia appears and begins his introduction. He tells us: "When I was six years old, I lived in Bangkok. My parents were Chinese. They ran a baptist church. Our church was directly opposite from a Buddhist temple. Being raised as a Christian, I began to wonder, what went on there. Of course my buddies told me some scary stories about those monks. Did they pray? Did they practice bizarre rituals? Did they eat little kids? - Then one night I couldn't wait any longer. Quietly I slipped into the temple. No monks around. Good.

Only the flickering wicks of the oil lamps, painting shadows on the wall. The smell of incense from the altar. When I heard the sounds of approaching monks, I hid myself. I found an alcove, where I had a good view of the sacred hall. The monks were sweating. They placed a coffin right in front of my face.

I think they knew the whole time that I was there. My heart hammered like crazy. 'What was I doing here anyway', went through my head. I started to shiver despite the cloying humidity. The thing put in front of me, the coffin, scared the hell out of me. But I forced myself not to run away. It was my dearest wish to learn from these monks. I wanted to be accepted by them to learn meditation. My buddies were talking about it. But I wanted to learn. So I sat there and looked at the monk in the box. He was an old guy. The flickering light and the sounds of the insects in the night aroused dark fantasies in my young impressionable mind. Yet, I was determined to see this through. Suddenly, I heard sounds like breathing. Was the old monk still alive? Was he coming out of his resting place? I had enough. After some hours of contemplating death amongst the Buddhists, I carefully withdrew myself from the temple."

After this tale it is time to jump start our physiology. Practice is king. Thus we follow Master Chia's commands: "Do the turtle. Do the crane. Do the golden spine. Stand up. Sit down. Stand up. Sit down." Being sufficiently ignited for higher meditations, we begin to turn the 'waterwheel'. We imagine a spark of warm chi travelling across the main acupuncture meridians of our body.

From the head to the perineum, and back up the spine, to the top of the head. Milling. Turning the wheel. Like a Van-De-Graaff Generator, the chi-atom circling through my body gains momentum. Faster and faster the chi-atom spins, producing bioelectricity. I feel my scalp tingling and my hair standing up. After a while, I turn hot and the acceleration of my body runs smoothly by itself. A nice, comfortable feeling. I just want to sleep. Alas, the seminar has closed for the day. We go to our rooms. I never felt so completely exhausted in mind and body, ever. I sleep like a log until the next morning.

Taking up my seat in the lecture room, we students are greeted by a jovial Master Chia. Smiling benignly at our assembly, he reveals to our astonishment: "Today I will do something I never did before and probably will never do again - opening your third eye 阴阳眼. I think: "The third eye. Wow. Imagine opening up that thing. The secret of Siddhi. Could it be for real?" At that point in my timeline, I had no practical experience with a mystical 'third eye' (who has?). During the 1970s I devoured the autobiography of one Lobsang Rampa, wherein he describes the changes in his body and mind upon drilling out his third eye in Tibet.

Now Master Chia takes centre stage. He raises his left hand, palm outward. Facing us, he pushes, like running slowly through Turkish taffy. The air in front of him turns opaque, showing ripples, like a stone thrown into a pond. Carefully concentrated, he continues his pushing. The air itself solidifies, billows, becoming more dense. Back and forth. The curves of air merge and turn even more solid. Suddenly, I feel some kind of soft force pulsing right betwixt my eyebrows. "Someone is knocking", I think.

Now Master Chia increases the range of his motions. The sensation on the bridge of my nose intensifies. He begins to transpire. Then - a sharp pain inside my forehead. Like an eggshell cracking. Master Chia's movements turn softer, less pushy. He circles his palm a minute longer, then halts in midair. He looks exhausted and withdraws quietly from the stage. It is already noon. I never noticed. Like a sleepwalker I retire to my hotel room. Setting my alarm for two hours. I collapse onto my bed. Too tired to eat.

Two hours later - still dazed - I sense something warm and sticky. A rotten smell like a half-eaten mouse on my pillow. I turn around, move up my head and notice some kind of squashed red cherry. Within the gelled blob. I can make out yellow grains of sand interspersed with green mucus. Dripping over my pillow. "I need a coffee, now", goes through my addled brain. Sipping my brew, I try to make sense of the excretions before me. My nose seems clogged and I blow into a handkerchief. Dark, green, smelly mucus appears. I sense a certain lightness engulfing my brain. I feel different. Lighter. The bridge of my nose expands, pulses. Like something that lives. A fog called 'ordinary life' has taken leave. One glance at my clock and I am back into the lecture room.

Whilst Master Chia drones on, my mind takes account of what happened to me: Since childhood I suffered from recurring inflammations of the frontal sinus. Right at the bridge of my nose. It always began in cold November and ended in February. These inflammations were so painful and disturbing (imagine a toothache inside your skull), that I sought medical aid: Prescribed were nasal steam baths, medicinal concoctions (chamomile), expectorants, etc. Useless. It became so bad, that I had to undergo surgery during the 1980s.

"That green stuff and the blood clots is the content of your nasal cavity. Accumulated over decades", goes through my mind. Still I am not completely there, in the here and now. Too much stuff swirls through my brain, trying to make sense of it all. I go through the Taoist routines, eat something and go to sleep. My window open to a starry night, comforted by a fragrant breeze.

6. THE TREE - HUGGERS OF THE ZUERICHBERG

Master Chia claps his hands: "Let's go. Let's go. Let's take advantage of the sunshine." Even mummified with a winter parka and a tweed slouch cap, the Master ushers our group into the parkways surrounding the Zuerichberg Hotel.

It is a Sunday and people are already walking around the green shrubs and trees. The first real warm day invigorates man and plants alike. We move along the flat meadows, and enjoy the beautiful vista over sparkling lake Zuerich.

After the profound changes in me during the past week, I just keep quiet. I am still overloaded with knowledge and Taoist calisthenics. My fellow students and I approach a grove with big trees. "The juices are a go-go-go", Master Chia exclaims. The juices are indeed up, as the trees show already well developed leaves. "Now I'll show you the secret of hugging a tree", he continues. He walks towards one huge specimen and starts to embrace it with extended arms. His slouch cap in the way, tilting. He groans and mumbles. Then mewling: "So good. So nice. So soft. Ahhhhh. Ohhhh. So good. So nice. Let's do it thrice!" Our Master in action. We all select a tree. Huggy-Huggy. Hotel guests and rambler alike shaking their heads in disbelief upon our 'tree-hugging'. Asians - what can you expect?

I start to sense the warmth of the bark, the fragrance of the earth and the blooming freshness surrounding me. The first flowers develop colours. Couples and families with kids look our way, a Swiss condescending smile on their bland faces. Now it is time for the next step. The still mummified expert hugger explains: "Give all your bad chi to the tree. Release all your worries, all your toxins right into the tree. Feel all the bad emotions leave your body and enter the tree." And that is what we do. I imagine that all my problems, anxieties and bad emotions are absorbed by the tree, which I am still embracing. And - it is a nice, strangely comforting sensation. I start to feel better, as if a lead weight is taken from my shoulders. I feel more indifferent towards people and stuff. More optimistic. It works. Madame Orelli would have been proud of our efforts. I think: "Tree hugging could be used for treating boozers. Crawl out of the bottle and into a tree."

Finally Master Chia reveals: "And now you receive all the good chi from the tree. Exchange your emotional garbage for love and hope and energy." I see smiles. Inebriation spreads in concentric, pulsing waves around me. My colleagues have a good time. Suddenly, I can make out the sap moving through the tree's arteries. Water from the ground and sugar from the leaves. I can feel the tree breathe. Inhaling. Exhaling. My heart beats now with the tree's own rhythm. Slow, but steady. With my inner vision I see the tree's cells soaking up the fuel. Expansion. Warm expansion. It is springtime on the Zuerichberg. Tomorrow I have to leave this place, I have learned to love.

7. OVER THE EDGE

Part 1 Manila

My studies with Master Chia come to an end in 1994. My intention is to complete my M.Sc. degree (finally) and to move on. On a very cold autumn day in Winterthur (a city built around a fortress-like insurance monolith), I work out my concept of 'break on through to the other side'. Taking my inspiration from John Lilly, the Doors and Stephen Hawking, I begin to design a complete system of sensory deprivation for Master Chia's 'Tao Paradise' in Chiang Mei. I give these designs as a parting gift to the Master for opening my third eye.

I meet Jerome in a high-tech company in Munich. He is my supervisor. If there is a spitting image for Gerard Depardieu in shape, voice and level of irritability and sheer chaos - it's the guy called Jerome. It is his birthday, and I give him sunglasses to protect his eyes. Neon Pink Miami Heat. Gorgeous Jerome.

He lives across the old Jewish cemetery in Munich. In the afternoon he works as a private eye. A few weeks later he invites me to the birthday of his Filipina girlfriend, Grace Lee. She and her son Kewmee share a nice four-room apartment with Jerome. He cooks shrimps in cocomilk curry sauce. Kewmee's culinary favourite. Later the 5-year-old boy impersonates Sammy Hagar, playing the air guitar, wiggling on the floor: "Could this be love?" His mother has tears in her eyes.

Jerome approaches me. It is a hot August day in Munich. He is nervous and agitated: "I am worried". I ask him: "What gives?" He: "Grace Lee and little Kewmee are missing in the jungle. They are supposed to be in Cagayan valley (Northern Philippines) now. But no word yet. Nothing. There was a typhoon!" Jerome has tried to contact Grace Lee's family in Aparri, the northernmost part of the archipelago. No information came forth. He feels guilty, because he stayed behind in Munich. He is on a big counterfeiting case for a Munich fashion house.

Actually he was so worried, that he had already bought a ticket for me. His parents from Frankfurt are coming down to Munich, to take care of his little zoo. The next day, we sit in a Lufthansa jet bound for Kuala Lumpur. There we are stuck for hours on the runway. Somewhere. In scorching noon heat. Finally our machine gets permission to proceed to Manila.

When I arrive with Jerome at NAIA airport, I am struck forcibly by the smell and cloying humidity. An abominable stench everywhere. Fetid and mouldy. Asian smell. My shirt is glued to my moist skin. Passing customs, we exit the airport, looking for a taxi. We have touched down in Paranaque and have to go to Malate. But there is no light. The whole Metropolis is cloaked by all-out brown-out. Good start. No electricity. No street lights outside the airport. Then it begins to rain. Fat greasy drops. Through the pitch black night, I can make out shaggy people hunched over small portable grills. Each barbecue illuminated by a dripping candle. When the wind wafts over the wicks, flickering shadows appear on the walls.

Creepy. I utter to Jerome: "I want to go back. Just back. I don't wanna stay here. This is depravity. That's fourth world, to what kind of hellhole have you abducted me?" I am furious. Jerome is one cool customer: "You are right. That's the Wild West here. But let me tell you - you should first rest and drink something. Tomorrow then you can fly back to Munich. OK ?" I acquiesce.

My German pal knows Southeast Asia like the back of his hand. He is finally able to flag down a Mercedes limousine by wiggling with his left hand. How the driver hones on him in this tarred darkness, is still beyond me. We drive down the coastal highway to Quezon City. Jerome casually says: "Look at the opposite lane there. It goes to Cavite. Criminals who are wanted in Manila hide out in the fishing villages there. Bad place. Bad voodoo. No law-enforcer from Manila dares to go there." We carry on. Through the rain. He continues: "Should we get ambushed now and held up

for passport and cash, you surrender nothing. Especially not your passport. I repeat: Whatever happens - never let go of your passport. Tomorrow we make copies and put the originals in a safety deposit box at the bank." Turning apprehensive, I ask: "You surely are joking." He: "No. I like it here. It's pioneer country. Wilde, man." Great prospects. Once again he plays his role as the big 'know-all': "Some years ago, they ambushed my taxi. I didn't care if it was local police or ordinary thugs. All the same here. I just visited my contacts at the NBI (National Bureau of Investigation). Coming from Taft. It was early morning, like 2 AM. We had the road for ourselves. No vehicle around. On the coastal highway, a barricade had been erected. One single guy waved a flashlight. My taxi driver started to curse, became indecisive. Out of the side mirror, I saw other guys approaching from the back, carrying pumpguns. The guy with the flashlight wanted cash and my passport. The taxi driver now was shaking, his hands were cramped around the steering wheel. I boxed that frozen taxi driver: 'Move, you idiot. Go, Go, Go!' As if bitten by a poisonous centipede, my driver finally defrosted. The guy's flashlight was already at my driver's window. I took my left foot (with solid shoe) and kicked down on the accelerator. Our Merc jerked forward. We gained momentum. Dumbfounded the stick up men just stood there. Then they had the glorious idea to run after our speeding vehicle. Too late."

We book into a small love-hotel in Santa Cruz. (Unbeknownst to me, I have checked into the vicinity which later should become my home: The Taoist Temple.) Fatum. Out of countless future roads available, you always collapse the same probability wave timeline. Waking up refreshed, and more hopeful, I check out the weather. The rain has abated. A friendly sun peeks out under a cloudy cover. Santa Cruz is a relief to the troglodytes of Paranaque. The natives here seem less threatening. For the first time, I see the lush vegetation sprouting everywhere. Flowers, shrubs and bougainvilleas are planted for the students who enjoy wild sex here in a conformist Catholic society. Pregnant with 14, 15 is 'normal'. Abandoned, humiliated and looking old beyond years with 25. Game over. No reset. "I loved him so much. He said, when I don't go with him to love-hotel, I don't really love him." Yeah, the Wild West. Jerome thrives on it, like a hothouse orchid. I have breakfast. Rice, boiled eggs and coffee. Love Radyo FM blasts 'eternal love songs', kids in L.A. would deem 'shootworthy': 33 bullets with a magnum, right into the loudspeakers.

But what about Grace Lee and her son Kewmee? Still no news. Working the telephone lines revealed, that they had gone off the radar somewhere near Tuguegarao. Next day, Jerome and I approach Tuguegarao airport. Who waits for us at the exit? Right. Jerome's lost Filipino tribe.

Grace Lee says: "Worry? Who, me? Hardly. What worry? Why did you spent all that money on tickets?" Ever the practical one. We never found out, how they knew in advance that we were dropping down on Tuguegarao. Jungle drums. In those pre-cellphone days Filipinos communicated across 7000 islands. With zero gadgets or technology.

Later, we take the overland bus to Aparri. It turns out to be a fishing village. Next neighbour across the South China Sea are the Spratley Islands. Politically a powder keg for WW III. We stay with the family of Grace Lee. Wandering about town, you can see mountains of freshly caught shrimps and a diversity of seafoods. Just lying around for pick up and processing. "Take what you want, we have enough", we hear the fishermen say. Nobody goes hungry there. Add a few bananas, mango and rice and you are good. Starving families are unheard of. It's a Manila problem. In Manila you die. But you have a smartphone.

I will never forget the heat and humidity in Aparri. We move with litre bottles of beer into the local grindhouse. No aircon. What we drink, we sweat out instantly. On screen, Bruce Lee is doing the 'Kowloon Cha Cha'. The typhoon which fell over the land, left scars of devastation behind. Grace Lee's brother JuJu has problems with the local police. We can not find the police station. It's gone. Only the concrete foundation and some pipes ripped out, remain. Police business is conducted in the still standing municipal hall.

Jerome eats icecream. He complains next about rectal tenesmus (a feeling of leaving something behind). I said: "Why do you have to eat all this shit? You knew the freezer was not working for

days?" He says: "Yeah, I love to eat this stuff." I checked out the local hospital, but it was already in Taiwan: The vortex of the typhoon cut off the hospital at its foundations and took it away in one piece out to the Taiwan Straits. Two Korean eel buyers were electrocuted. First by open trunk lines and then decapitated by the whipping recoil cables. To make doubly sure. Finally I find a physician, retired, reading Perry Mason in front of his still standing home. He looks at our potty Jerome. Dysentery. I go and buy antibiotics and saline/glucose IV's in Tuguegarao. Somehow that guy Jerome survived.

We return to Santa Cruz. I want to visit Chinatown. Taking a jeepney to Ongpin street. Alighting from the stuffed vehicle, we are greeted by the local 'Taoist', a madman. Shaggy long hair and beard. Dressed in a soiled loincloth, he offers us a clear plastic bag filled with his dark urine: "My friends. A gift to the wise. Enjoy." Somehow I like this guy. Perhaps my Taoist training will turn me into something like him. One day. Scary. We leave our new acquaintance behind and walk up to the Estero.

The Estero has been a nice place for 'Tsinoy's' (Chinese-born living in the Philippines) for dining out. Kind of an embankment, draped with red lanterns and small restaurants, serving the usual local Filipino/Hokkien mix. Inside Filipinos are kneading dough in the heat, manufacturing thousands of mungo bean cakes (hopia). One can sit along the 'river' and watch the Hokkieneses 福建話 shuffle by. They polluted this small river, so that the miasma of shit, rot and piss will gyrate even the most resilient Tsinoy stomach.

Across this culinary paradise, they erect a condominium tower. I instantly identify it as a 'crab design' to milk the buyers and tenants. Living in a building like this, squeezes you dry. Literally. [I watched the progress on the 'crab tower' in Ong Pin over the years. I predicted a delay, by observing the work force on site. Construction halted indefinitely, after polluted Estero water flooded the foundation of the building. People living in Ong Pin told me, that the place has a 'bad Feng Shui'. During the Marcos presidency (1965-1986), the government erected an office building there. The intention was, to supervise and 'better govern' the unruly Hokkieneses in this area. Like the Leaning Tower of Pisa, the building began to tilt. The employees became scared. Slowly it began to sink into the mire of the Estero. Come rainy season, the building was deemed ready for evacuation and city condemnation. Since then the place was used as a parking lot.]

Whilst work on the crab tower has ground to a halt, Jerome and I explore a strange hotel which houses a coffeeshop. Directly opposite an insectoid (sic) fastfood chain has opened shop. On the sidewalk vis-a-vis the coffeeshop, popped up a chicken barbecue stand. Upon observing the chi flow for an hour, I declare without hesitation: "The insect-foods resto will go bust in 1 1/2 years, the chicken guy in just 3 months time." And so it happened in Chinatown.

Part 2 Hong Kong

Jerome and I descend on old Kai Tak airport into Kowloon bay. It was the old home of her Majesty's RAF and Cathay Pacific after WW II. We fly right into five-storied apartment buildings. Fresh laundry and TV sets on overdrive appear in our window. Busy shoppers and shuffling vendors below on the street. I am not scared, because this approach is done by certified HK-cleared pilots. But I don't like to drop into 70% piss water of Kowloon bay. (It happens occasionally). Later - when I shop around in the streets - my situation is reversed: I think I can grab the extended landing gear of the jumbo. Amazing. The wings of the descending airplane are just metres away from scratching the tenements.

I like it there in Hong Kong. Jerome and Master forcibly have to drag me back to Manila. Studying the Feng Shui of the various places and buildings, I come to the following conclusion: When they'll abandon Kai Tak airport, the beating heart of HK will die. Business and tourism will go down. After switching to Chek Lap Kok airport, constructed on reclaimed land, HK falls deep. Asian economic crisis, civil unrest against the new overlords from Peking, transfer from liberal politics to Communist pussyfooting. And the pollution of all areas of life in the former Crown

Colony through Mainland Chinese technocrats.

Blessings from heaven: Our travel agency drops us at the Peninsula Hotel, the former ginny watering hole of the expats. Avoiding the pricey nightclubs, we thrive on champagne, salmon sushi and fresh oysters. Courtesy of the Kowloon supermarkets, life is cheaper than anywhere else in the world. Thus fortified, we jump onto the MTR railway to Lo Wu station. Hundreds of aged Cantonese, carrying bags and rollers stuffed with merchandize back to Shenzhen. Sandwiched between waddling grannies and grampies, we proceed to immigration. We receive our HK exit stamp. Now we are allowed to shuffle along the DMZ, barbed wire and Red Army soldiers pointing machine guns at us from above. The land is devoid of any vegetation, just white-yellow sand. It reminds me of the foot-border at Dorasan train station, crossing over to North Korea.

Typical Jerome: "Just imagine, what will happen to us, stranded here in no-man's-land. Those guys don't look very friendly." We walk indian file with the subdued peasants towards Red China immigration. Obviously, they peddle their produce in HK and return with desired consumer goods back to Canton. Finally we reach customs. Nothing to declare into China. Next we have to obtain a visa for Shenzhen. Officially were are not allowed to travel freely in Canton province. Very austere Communist offices. The immigration officer disapproves of our R.O.C. Taiwan visas in our passports. But he approves of our German nationality: "Volkswagen. Mercedes. OK." We feel relieved. We pay our fee. A fat, brutal Communist stamp claims one whole page in our passport. Jerome: "If this kind of stamping continues, we need a new passport soon". He is right. Poverty around us. Chilling. Austerity. I sing to myself: "The Great Leap Forward. Modernization and Electrification of the Country and Marxist-Leninist-Dialectic into every Village is the Future of our beloved China."

We are good. At last. A 'Communist Greeting Committee', consisting of Red Army soldiers, with red-gold sashes draped over their dark green uniforms, (which spell out in golden characters: "Progress and Prosperity. Welcome to the wonderful People's Republic Of China"). They are friendly. They smile at us long-noses. We feel like 'international friends'. It reminds me of Hungary, GDR and North Korea rolled into one. No foreigners around.

We are very thirsty. In front of the railway station are small stands, offering various kinds of refreshments. We select one with a red tea urn, the vendor prepares for us 'liquorice health tea'. I never experienced a stranger taste in my life. We each drink 3 big bowls of syrupy medicinal stuff. Twenty minutes later, we are floating. Fatigue and soreness are gone. Jerome goes shopping: Tea sets, figurines, brush and ink sets. I follow behind. After five hours of haggling, we carry candy-striped shopping bags filled to the brink with merchandize. We go back to the liquorice tea vendor and drink two more bowls. It is time to venture into Shenzhen's shopping centres. Each centre is home to hundreds of small shops on multiple levels. They offer everything from refrigerators, hand made suits, antiques, paintings (ranging from 30 cm to 6 metres in length), snack foods, jewelry, jade (nephrite) figurines, toys, herbs, electronics, mattresses and the de rigueur thermos-bottles with flower motif. We buy gifts and winter clothing for the mountains of Mankayan, Benguet.

It is now dark outside. We are so exhausted, that we check into the brand-new Shangri-LaLa in Shenzhen. We meet a German executive from VPO in the lobby. We ask him about the business for German companies here in Shenzhen. He tells us: "Forget it. I am here in Canton since 3 years. This is still Communist country with heavy red tape. They hold all the cards. We hold all the bad ones." We enjoy a fine dinner and good cigars, we brought over from Hong Kong. Time to rest. Tomorrow we will explore Canton province.

Jerome's sex drive is in high gear this morning: "Move. Move. I want to enjoy the pleasures of this here country girls." We take a bus into the province, moving up North, past the WOW theme park. Chinese families stare at us. Gwailos are still a curiosity here in South China. Kids giggle, pointing at their noses. Mothers, embarrassed, look imploringly at the lady conductor. The conductor says something in Cantonese, shrugs her shoulders: "Sure. Gwailos from over the

border. So what?" Now she turns towards me and Jerome. Again she shrugs her shoulders as if to say: "Cantonese peasants. What can you expect?"

I like her. We pass by sandy plains, ready for the construction of expensive condominium towers: "Where is all the money coming from?", I wonder. In front of the newly erected high-rises, old people pitifully display their wares on blankets: Medicine, hearing-aids and gadgets. Giant red inflatable plastic arcs in the front, cry out in golden characters: 'Hurry. Golden opportunity. Apartments now ready for occupancy.' Driving down this well developed highway, I imagine shopping malls, hospitals and restaurants: Soon to be part of the urban sprawl of Shenzhen. Shenzhen soon to be sprawling over into Hong Kong. Melting into each other like processed cheese.

A fresh and balmy breeze wafts though our bus. On crossroads, insane Cantonese vehicle-operators (bikes, motorcyclos, tricycles, oxcarts, motorbikes, pushcarts and any form of combustion-driven engine) claims way of right. Impervious to approaching hi-speed buses or trucks. You'll never ever see this kind of suicidal behavior in Western countries. As they spurn government and party - so they spurn consideration for others. Our bus driver goes in seconds from 80 down to 5 mph. An old man blocks up the road with his produce - laden oxcart.

We enter city proper. Suddenly, the passengers become agitated. Families move their seatings around. Grab their bags and rollers. The friendly conductress says in dialect: "You have to leave. Now. You can not stay here. Go." Jerome and I see no reason at all to leave the bus. We have paid up. Like pack rats, the families have left the sinking ship. The bus is empty. Only our driver remains. He nervously gesticulates with hands and feet towards the exit of the bus.

I have a sinking feeling. Something is not right. Jerome and I hurry to the back seat window. The driver turns off the engine. Red Army soldiers with machine guns surround our bus. We halt inside a walled enclosure, made of old city walls, fortified with concrete. The space is just sufficient for the bus. Not one of our fellow passengers is around. Posters and banners proclaim 'CPC New Year Victory Over Defeatist Attitude', 'PLA New Year Victory Over Imperialism', etc. Jerome - who is familiar with these kind of encounters from his undercover days in Pyongyang - whispers: "Don't talk. Smile. Wave both your hands and say loud: "HMMN NNGEU. HMMN NNGEU". Thus we stand upright in the back of the bus and wave to the machine gun holding soldiers. Soon after, first one, then all of them smile at us. The commanding officer chimes in and shouts at the driver to move his damned 'piece of crap vehicle' through the checkpoint. The driver shakes his head in disbelief and turns on the engine. Jerome and I fall back into our seats. Relief washes over our beating hearts. The Cantonese squirrel back into the bus: Repacking, rearranging, reanimating. The conductress appraises us with renewed respect. That's why I like her.

Two hours later - deeper into Canton - I see a small town just right out of a picture book. Old fashioned houses, town gate, enclosed by a bending small river. I tell Jerome: "Here we are likely to find your pleasure girls." On the next station we disembark. We enter a typical South Chinese town. We wander around, astonished at the inconsistencies: The inner city is made up of old buildings, one kilometre from its core there abound brand new houses in the same style, with orange glazed tiles and white-washed walls. "New money from the new China", Jerome muses. The newly erected one-story houses look uninhabited. No people around. We find a bakery with excellent pastries. We buy provisions for me for three days. Plus bottled water. The sales girl is delighted over the big deal. I am very choosy with food. Jerome eats everything, everywhere and pays the price.

Inside the old city wall, I finally detect a barber shop. Pleasure girls ply their trade out of barber shops. Near the barber shop is a pub. We enter the barber shop. Chinese girls sit along one side on broken chairs. No customers are served here. TV runs in the background. Jerome has set his sights on a beautiful, well stacked girl over 20. She wears her hair in Communist pig-tails. The TV explodes in Cantonese commercials and a Sung Dynasty soap opera. Made in Red China. Better than TVB, the former HK Shaw Brothers movie company. Somehow - without speaking each

others' language - Jerome and the Red Pioneer girl strike a deal. They vanish into a 'hotel' around the corner.

Jerome tells me later: "She was cute. So tall. My height. Taking my hand. Led me into a 'love hotel'. I paid for one hour. The 'pleasure room' consisted of a bunk bed with a small blanket. The Pioneer Girl undressed naturally, her cantaloupes falling nicely. Heavy stuff. Her body was clean and womanly. A supervising babushka sat on a rickety chair. Smiling benevolently at me. The first foreigner in her life. Just separated from our bed by a flimsy curtain. How could I make love to the China girl, with the babushka listening in on our every movement, every sexual evocative sound we would make?" He pauses and reflects: "The China girl lay down on the lower bed. Spreading her legs, she welcomed me into her 'jade grotto'. Whilst entering her pleasure garden repeatedly, I bumped my head several times on the metal wiring of the upper bed. Withdrawing myself from 'cloudy-hair-mountain', I knocked the back of my head against the metal frame of the bunk bed. Across from us, behind a flimsy curtain, the babushka giggled". Jerome shows me his wounded scalp. A roadmap of pleasure.

Whilst Jerome explores the wonders of the 'Communist Love Garden', I sit in the pub next door and learn the local dialect from the proprietor. A nice fellow. I taught him English, he taught me local Cantonese. More and more people enter the pub, to take a look at the gwailo. I entertain five, then ten, then twenty relatives, neighbours, business associates, party members and 'Pioneers of the Red Wave of Victory over Imperialist Empires of the World'. Surrounded by open mouthed Cantonese, I tell stories about Germany and the United States. Laughter. Merriment. Whilst Jerome next door dives deeper and deeper into the mysteries of soft-white, lush socialist hospitality. And finally climaxes in a higher understanding of Marxist-Leninist practical doctrine, Made in China.

Later, a beaming Jerome joins us in the pub. We drink tea. Smoke socialist cigarettes. The proprietor asks, if Jerome has a wish. Jerome nods and says: "Yes. Please give me some dog meat." Surprised the owner gives orders to some people standing near our table. They return fifteen minutes later, with a greasy package excreting an unbearable stench. Jerome's favourite. Our host is happy and hands over the package to Jerome as a parting gift. I settle our bill. It is time to leave these kind and warm people.

We take the bus back to Shenzhen. Like refugees, we walk over the border to Hong Kong, packed with blue and red candy-striped bags. Smelling of PVC and dog meat.

At Kai Tak airport, we are judged being too heavy for Cathay Pacific. They don't allow us to enter the jet back to Manila. Jerome turns up his charm: "Can we enter without this bag here?" The female officer smiles and says: "Yes. If you can get rid of this one bag." Jerome winks at me and we hide behind a concrete post. We stuff all the contents of the bag inside our coats, shirts and trousers. Bloated and 15 kilo heavier, we prance in front of the airline officers. They burst out laughing. Even the customs agent is unable to hide his amusement. He laughs and waves us gwailos through.

Inside the airplane a revolt is fomenting. Filipino politicians protest. Chinese businessmen threaten to bring suit against the airline. People talk. The co-pilot visits us. He says: "Gentlemen. What is the problem?" The problem is Jerome's dog meat.

Its obnoxious smell has penetrated the plastic of the upper compartment. Then wafting along the aisle towards the cockpit. Jerome is forced to surrender his greasy treasure. Contrite, he bids farewell as his package is stored away by the stewardess. Turning her head, she assures Jerome that he will receive his dog meat in prime condition upon landing at Manila airport.

"Not, if I'll be there first", I swear under my breath.

8. THE IGOROT PEOPLE

Jerome flies back to Munich. A few weeks later, I board a propeller-driven plane to Baguio, the famous summer retreat of affluent Manilenos. Come April to June, life is unbearable in the Metropolis. Scorching and oppressive, with a humidity around 80%, you can as well enter a sauna. Like in Japan, it saps all energy from you.

My intention is to conduct research on the shamanistic practices of the Igorot people in Benguet province. Spirited away in a twin-propelled Focke-Wulf sardines can. Reaching out for Baguio 'airport', the pilot has to bring down the machine onatop a small mesa, surrounded by pine trees. The landing strip is just a few hundred metres long, then ends in a precipice. 'Kai Tak a la Baguio', goes through my mind. Forced by shearing winds, the pilot apologizes over the PA system for two consecutive attempts of a touchdown. As if on cue, Filipinos vomit away after standstill. The stench of bile and urine permeates the tiny cabin.

I move up the country in a special 'chaser' bus to Mankayan. The vista exploding at my window is breathtaking. Mountains, melting down into foothills, appear around dangerous bends and curves. One wrong move with the steering wheel, and down it goes, 600 metres or more. Every minute can be the last, when our 'chaser' bus overtakes jeepneys, loaded to the brink with fresh produce. Pine trees everywhere, darkening the serpentine road up, up, into the clouds. The air is fresh and invigorating. Mesas for farming have been wrested from the mountain spirits to enable high yield harvesting on limited space. They build upon another like stacked dishes. Pictures of inner China pop into my mind. Taoists imbibing copious amounts of yeasty rice wine. Bizarre rock formations, cragged precipices and harsh contrasts of light and shadow. Small waterfalls and bamboo tube aqueducts distribute moisture for growth. Our bus passes schoolkids and geriatric farmers, waving at us. A signboard on the road: "School 300 metres down here", accompanied by a red arrow. A short cut for education. It's all here in the Philippines. But - no birds. All killed by expensive German pesticides no one can afford. Due to the lack of birds, the flies multiply on prevalent chicken shit.

The bus stops at my destination. A concrete roof on four pillars. Behind lush vegetation and blooming flowers a small village. I ask a native lady, cleaning her front yard: "Where can I find the Igorot healer?" "Ahhh, you surely mean Lolo Nespo. Yes. Yes. He was here. But now he is gone. Yes.", she answers in good English. They are all good educated here in the mountains. Some speak even Japanese, when this area had to produce metal ores for the hungry Empire of the Rising Sun. And the best pleasure girls for the warlords. Then it seems, the lady remembers something: "Try the meadow up there. Can be, he is there for his back. He likes the morning sun."

I follow the path up the hill, leading to a meadow. Young pine trees and saplings abound. Through the high grass, I can make out a brown figure hunched over. It's a man without a shirt. His back is exposed to the warm sun. He sees me approaching: "Hello." "Hello", I say, then: "Are you the one called Lolo Nespo?" "Yes", he answers, "I am". I squat beside him in the grass. The wind is cool and fresh. I take my time to tell him, why I have come up here into the highlands. Then he asks me: "Why do you like to learn our native healing techniques?" I say: "I am a psychologist. I want to write a paper about your local shamanistic traditons and healing procedures. I want to preserve this knowlwdge." He nods: "Yeah. I understand. We have no books, no written documents about our indigenous 'religion of the rice god'. That makes me sad. I ask: "How do you learn to become a healer?" He explains: "We look and listen to the old healer. Then we do it. Then he corrects us. Or not. Like now I am healing my back. My kidneys are weak. So I take the sunbeams right here into my kidneys, to make me feel warm. Then I feel better."

"Come I show you something", he gestures to me. He goes to a two metre high pine tree. I follow. "Have you ever eaten pine nuts?" "No", I say. He picks a pine cone. With his pocket knife he removes the edible seeds. He puts one in his mouth and chews on it. I do like him. A biting, tangy

flavour. "Like turpentine to go", I think to myself. He says: "It is very healthy. You can put the seeds away as medicine for the rainy season. Put them in food." I have read about this custom in ancient China. Taoists hiding in the remote mountains, subsisting on pine tree products; seeds, needles and bark. The flavonoids and medicinal powers are well documented in Chinese pharmacopeiae since the Han Dynasty. Nibbling on pine products drives hunger away.

I am invited to stay in Lolo Nespo's house over night. One brother surrenders his tiny room to the German 'researcher'. Nightfall is early in the tropics. At 7 PM everything is dark. Only the stars of the Southern hemisphere light up. No pollution. Hundreds upon hundreds of flies have flocked to the plywood ceiling. We sit outside. It is getting cold. Lolo's feet are swollen. He has 'Hobbit's feet', from his days building stone and concrete reinforcements for the DPWH. Building serpentine suicide roads, connecting remote mountain villages.

Unbeknownst to us, a sneaky guy has approached out of the shadows. Suddenly he shoots out from the coffee trees. Red Fox, the wise man of this village. He speaks excellent English. He lives next door with his wife. He likes to smoke and I give him some money to buy cigarettes. Then it is time to eat. Fresh eggs, vegetables, potatoes, apple pancakes and coffee. The food is good. I like it here.

After dinner, Lolo Nespo brings out the good stuff. Home made rice wine (tapey). Like tuba (fermented coconut juice) in Leyte, they always come in gallons. "We have to drink this stuff now", he says. "Why?", I ask. "Because its shelf life is only one week", he replies. I sample a glass. Tears come to my eyes. I shudder. Sit again upright. Lolo smiles at the Americano. The rice wine has a tangy, yeasty flavour. Different from Korean or Japanese products, I am familiar with. A bitter aftertaste. I hate sweet rice wine. "How do you do it?" I ask. "Well", he proudly smiles, "We spit into the rice". He continues: "We ask a virgin or little boy of the family to spit several times into the cooked, small grained rice. We use gelatinous rice like your people (meaning Chinese) making tikoy (a round, very sweet rice-sugar confection sold mostly during Chinese New Year by vendors). Then we add mashed ginger, a little bit cane sugar, yeast and old bubod (residue of last week's rice wine production) as a starter culture. Finally, we spit into the porcelain jar. Then we saccharifornicate (sic) for a week. "They know their stuff, these Igorots", I think to myself, holding out my glass for a new 'just a little one, just for checking the quality'.

I want to support my host and we go to Baguio to buy groceries. Passing in front of our 'shopper's mart' on mainstreet, I can make out some kind of 'runes'. Like ancient Egyptian hieroglyphics. I take out pen and paper and copy the runes into my diary. Back in the village, I show Lolo Nespo the copied symbols. His eyes widen in astonishment: "These are our sacred signs. Our tribal record language". He opens up to me, more and more. His tales enable me to better understand, what had happened to their indigenous religion over time.

Their basic rites center around the male fertility god. He is an ugly, devil-like entity. Mostly carved out of blackened nara or jakal wood. Indestructible. Termites never touch nara. This deity is just called 'rice god'. The 'rice god' is the protector of the produce and rice fields. He is responsible for male boys. The shaman, who conducts the blessings, can also curse. He dances through the rhythmic sounds of bamboo drums and small brass gongs. Then he falls into a trance. He wears a red loincloth embroidered with sacred symbols. On his head he wears a black 'birds nest' contraption. A kind of cargo-cult headgear for channeling down the 'rice god'. Within the cerebral nest sits a bird skeleton. The type of dead poultry denotes the 'spiritual power' of the village shaman. Feathers and some mana-containing items (like flashlight batteries and plastic toys) are woven into the wire frame. The whole thing looks like my EEG contraption in Hungary sans birdie - cultural synchronicities. The shaman then blesses household appliances and tools, by inscribing them with those hieroglyphics, I encountered on top of the supermarket. The evil counterpart (when the good guy looks that bad, how does the bad guy look?) of the 'fertility king' is the 'mow-mow/mau-mau'. A kind of Tasmanian devil-look-alike abomination, who snatches young girls and unsuspecting housewives at night. That's why nobody from the village goes out after 7

PM. No joke.

Mundane matters, concerning tribal conflicts and problems are regulated (!) by the reverend 'Council of the Elders'. They are omnipresent at local gatherings (weddings, baptisms, funerals), crouching conspirationally on the dusty floor. Their bodies make up a circle of 7. Their heads are turned to the centre of the circle. They whisper. Nod. Disagree. Nod. Then the leader decides, 6 heads nod in unison. Case closed. Their verdict is final and never questioned by the villagers. Coming next day, I set out to visit some of the Elders.

They all live in log cabins of differing styles - subject to their financial abilities. The cabins are erected on wooden platforms, which again are supported by wooden pillars. There is always a crawlspace under each solid dwelling, where wood and other construction materials are stored. The ground itself is tamped clay. During the rainy season, the waters can drain, later dry easily in the circulating air. Each main door faces sunrise (East). Each bedroom faces sunset (West). Each cabin is equipped with a small front yard, where coffee bushes and flowers bloom (ming tang)

I use my stay to practice tai chi chuan, on Lolo Nespo's happy meadow. Shadowboxing as taught to me by my Masters in Tao. Nourishing sunbeams penetrate the pores of my skin. The pines and the balmy breeze really 'pack' the chi inside my body. After I finish my routine, I meditate and let the chi circulate in the waterwheel.

In December and January, the temperatures can drop below zero. When the cold winds from the Himalayas wrap Northern Luzon into a cold blanket. In front of Lolo Nespo's house are two coffee bushes. Every morning, I water my bush with fresh, concentrated urine. Some months later, I check on the progress of my coffee bush. It has overtaken all other bushes in the neighbourhood by size. It is the general opinion amongst the Igorot coffee experts, that the special German urine makes the best tasting coffee beans. More aromatic and with a higher caffeine content. More invigorating. I am glad and wave my coffee bush goodbye.

9. THE CLOSED-DOOR-STUDENT

I am in Taipeh, near Snake Alley 華西街夜市. Visually appetizing from the outside, ugly and cheap inside. They serve snake soup here. It tastes like chicken, but pulling tiny rib cages out of my teeth is really not my thing. Japanese and Mainland Chinese around me think differently. They buy snakes preserved in giant liquor bottles, snake sperm alcoholic drinks in small bottles and snake-power-tablets in big cardboard boxes. Like carny barkers, the 'snake butchers' are calling out to the tourists. Catching a snake, pinning down its head, strangling the creature with a wire and hooking it up on a rafter. Then slipping the knife into the writhing serpent, the hot blood spills into a bowl held thereunder. With elegance and speed the 'active chi blood' is mixed with the cooler liquor, to be consumed instantly. Hands of the Japanese go up, then the Chinese. The Americanos are reluctant to try, but still fascinated by the spectacle. 'Soft sex videos' of the boring kind are 'offerishimazued' on other stands, containing Asian Payboy channel models. Counterfeit handbags, watches, clothes. Footmassage parlors. Brothels. Some teenage live girls, displayed in neon pinko showcases. I don't like tattooed girls. Ready for consumption. Knowing my Japanese friends, they will be over them in no-time.

It is a warm Saturday evening. My gums are still sore and swollen from the limey betel nut, my taxi driver offered me before. This 'mild stimulant' gives me a high, lasting several hours. But that suits me fine, because I sample the bookstores and Taoist temples in this oldest district of Taipeh. The sales ladies are interested and helpful. They never have gwailos for customers. Opposite Snake Market is Dragon Mountain Temple 艋舺龍山, a typical folk-religion institution. It is home to Taoist and Buddhist deities. The design is typical of South China. Dragons onatop ready to strike out for good luck and strapping boys.

I avoid the tourist traps and enter the streets behind Snake Alley. Labourers, taxi drivers and pleasure girls eat here. I choose a simple restaurant, sit outside on a folding table. The air turns cool and balmy. Smells of sesame oil, garlic, and spilled rice wine. Traffic dies down. The seafood is fresh and delicious. I eat shrimps and prawns in chili sauce. Tastes Hokkienese. I avoid the 'rubber tire cooking', so popular with the Hokkienese. I remember that they are neighbours, just separated by the Taiwan Straits. The beer is excellent, 'Kingsley', I think. The staff starts to clean the tables, folding them up and place them aside. Space is generated. Everything is hosed down with scalding hot water, then scrubbed. Better than in Manila. And safer. It is late and I can not find a taxi back to Kaohsiung airport hotel. Wine houses and restaurants have closed shop. No lights. In the distance, I can make out a faint light. A chicken restaurant still open for business. I venture inside. The chef hacks the chicken transversally, meat and bones lumped together. I present the business card with my hotel's address. I ask for a taxi. The guy shrugs his shoulders, asks me to buy chicken. My efforts on Taishanese are noted by a middle aged couple, who have just arrived to order foods. They ask politely in good English: "From what country are you?" "I am from Munich", I say. "Oh, our son is in Frankfurt studying engineering. Please come with us. It is an honor to bring you to your hotel." I am grateful for their assistance. I step into a comfortable van. We talk about Taiwan, Germany and the United States. Intelligent, nice people. They deliver me right to the reception of my hotel. Next morning, I have to fly over to Manila.

I am not happy. At the moment I have the money and opportunity to search for a Taoist master. The Chinese approach to religion and the supernatural in general, can be understood as 'practical'. If prayers to the gods are answered and fulfilled, they stay with a certain temple. If not, they look for a better wish-fulfilling institution. Despite this opportunistic attitude, the belief in ghosts (especially wronged relatives and business partners), demons and gods, is so deeply ingrained into the psyche of the Middle Kingdom, that every act of gambling/betting is followed either by cursing the gods or praising them. My big mistake was, to apply Western rationalism and 'armchair knowledge' to Chinese everyday life customs. Typical Western academic arrogance. Nothing had prepared me for the 'real' or 'folk' Taoism as being practiced in those smoky, dirty temples in Taipeh

and Manila. Surprisingly not the HK movies had it wrong - I had.

1994 saw me travelling to the Eastern Visayas. To Catbalogan. Then I crossed the narrowest strait in the world - San Juanico Strait - over to Leyte. There the greatest naval battle in history took place in 1944. I intend to investigate the infamous 'Leyte witches' (mangkukulams). In Recto (Chinatown) then operated a 'voudou shop', selling white envelopes containing herbs, spices and spells. The sorcery sold there, was an eclectic hodgepodge of Jewish Kabbalism, Santeria, and Catholicism. The instructions elaborated in detail on 'how to bewitch' or 'kill a target' (kulamin). Black magic is still a good business all over Asia. Local religions (Catholic, Buddhist, Taoist, Islam) have never deterred anybody from conferring with the dark forces. And this goes through all social levels, irrespective of any college education. It is and will always be part of Asia.

I heard 'eyewitness reports' from Filipinos, that Samar-warlocks could turn walking canes into snakes and vice versa. They'd love to poison Americanos in bars and restaurants, the 'Joe' then dropping into a prolonged coma. Rescued by the kind proprietor, who offers a restorative concoction for hard cash. I don't find any shred of evidence for 'witchcraft' down there. Then I return back to Manila.

Holding office at the Taoist Temple many years later, I am consulted time and again by guilty Filipinas. They never tell me the truth, but they are still haunted by their sins committed in ignorance: Having aborted their babies. My nose twitches - fire and brimstone is worn like perfume from hell by these women. It is the stench of illegal abortion clinics, hidden deep down in the barrios. Run by 'naturopathic folk hilots'; these 'healers' punch the fetus through the uterine walls of the abortee. Wrecked with pain and swallowing herbal abortives, the shredded, pulpy fetus is excreted into a slimy, smelly bucket: Food for the pigs. But it can get worse. Due to the tropical climate and nasty humidity, the extended and opened cervix invites sepsis. But there is no money for proper medicine or a short check-up in a hospital: "My husband shall never know, what I did". I vividly remember a case in Marikina, where the proprietess of a street cusina (selling hamburgers to school kids) prematurely delivered a baby. Stillborn. The abortee and her mother were so piss poor, that they burned the fetus inside an aluminium box, normally containing ground beef for their hamburger production. The patties were manufactured in one single room, which served also as a sleeping/living/washing room. The 'crispy fetus' then was secretively buried under the moon, somewhere in some abandoned cemetery. This story is being topped by a middle aged Filipina in Bicol, who drank herself into a stupor, gobbling up litres of abortive liquor. Her teenage son watched the birth of a four-month old baby, locked away in a glass jar: "The baby was still breathing. His little arms moved up and down. It looked at me with sad eyes. Then its breathing stopped."

My time has come to return back to Munich. On my last day in Manila, I browse through the Feng Shui section of a local booksellers chain. Just opposite my old 'love hotel' in Santa Mesa. A yellow cover attracts my immediate attention. It is a soiled and dirtied copy and I ask the saleslady for a discount. It is granted. Within the 'Pun Soy' book, I find at last the very formula, Master Chia could not provide: What direction of the Pa Kua is being associated with a particular Taoist Immortal. The book's author is a Taoist priest residing nearby. It is a hot Sunday afternoon. I walk to the temple's location, elaborately described on the back cover. I am thirsty and tired. Stifling heat and flies inside the temple. Bored matrons either snoring or whisking away flies. The stench of urine from the temple's 'guest toilet'. No staff. No assistance whatsoever. Where is the author of the yellow book? Disappointed I return to my hotel in Malate.

At night, I find no sleep. My flight is in the afternoon. Something is bothering my unconscious mind. A picture tries to insert itself persistently into my awareness. Fades in, fades out. Like a honing beacon in the night. Tossing and turning, a frame materializes within my excited mind. The picture in the temple I recently visited. The one above the confessional. The picture wants to tell me something. Or is it the content of the picture? Colours swirl, solidify and spell out a message: "Go back to the temple. Take a snapshot of the picture and return home." I decide to go

back to the temple early in the morning. A decision, which will turn my life upside down. Change it in ways, I'd never dreamt possible.

It is 8 AM and the temple gates are opened for the public. Camera in hand, I rush into the audience hall. Towards the altar and the confessional. Pointing the lens at the frame, I notice 8 celestial beings, frolicking within the clouds. These beings are known to the Chinese as the 8 Lucky Saints. It is actually a painting from Taiwan. Pressing the button of my camera, a booming voice shouts at me from the back: "No. No. Not allowed. No. No. NO!" I turn my head around and witness a red faced gnome. He steps forward, attacking me like a raging bull. He is surely agitated, gesticulates to me with pushing movements, to step away from the confessional. His face resembles a red beetroot: A dwarfish mophead, with horn-rimmed spectacles a la mode 1962. 'Red China caretaker guy', I detect. Contrite, I begin to apologize for my present behaviour. I put my camera away. My attacker has somewhat cooled off. I justify my impertinence as best as I can, under the circumstances in this Taoist sanctuary: "You know, I am from Munich. I want to bring this wonderful picture to my country. I love it so much. I've never seen anything like it." The mophead senses my sincerity: "OK. OK. Just wait here. OK. OK." His colour tone switches to dark pink. Mr. Mophead goes up the staircase to the first floor. Upon his return, he hands out big cardboard reproductions of the painting of the 8 Lucky Saints. Suddenly I recognize his face from the back of the yellow book: "You are that Taoist Master from the Feng Shui book!" He starts a little smile: "Yes. Yes. That's right." Flattered. He nods in affirmation of this historical event. Now being more pacified by the gwaio, the Master goes in meltdown mode. He appoints his wife Natasha benevolently, to document posing with me via photography. Holding up the image of the 8 Lucky Saints in front of us, like a giant mock up cheque, indicative of hitting the jackpot.

After all misunderstandings have been put aside, I am informed that his fans call him tenderly 'Rev.Vic'. Amazing. I try to explain to him and his lovely wife, that I am a psychologist who would like to learn more about the Taoist religion. I further elaborate on my previous studies with Master Chia. Rev.Vic(torio) measures me up, squints his eyes behind Communist turtleshell-glasses. He says: "Okay. Come back every Saturday after 7 PM." Unbeknownst to me, he plays an elaborate game. Playing me for a fool (which I am). The lady manager of the college ring manufacturer 'Domino's Jewellers Inc.' in Manila, is also the purveyor for Rev.Vic's temple. The lady crafts the very moulds, upon which are then the metal lucky charms stamped out, like carplates in a prison workshop. Polished with rouge paint and sold in the temple shop. The lady manager gave Rev.Vic. previously - without my consent, samples of my 'Tomorrow Tao' pins and keychains. Thus he knew so much about me - but I didn't know anything about him. Like a spider waiting for its prey, he spun his trap.

I return back to Munich. Several months later, I sell all my worldly possessions or just give them away. I buy a ticket to Manila. In January 1996, I begin my apprenticeship at the Taoist Temple. To save money, I live in Pampanga province. Every Saturday, I take the bus to Binondo (Chinatown). Around 7 PM, I arrive. Then Rev.Vic tells me to close the temple gates. Followed by closing the doors, with the exception of one. Later a Hokkienese friend of Rev.Vic shows up, he is responsible for a government subsidy to construct the temple. He is a kind man, possessing the power to speak the English language. We talk deep into the night.

He serves as an interpreter between me and Rev.Vic. I learn my first Hokkienese words, the Master his first English. And so it goes: Always on a Saturday. The closed-door-student has finally arrived. A bridge has been established between two alien cultures. Only the future will tell, if this bridge can survive a stress test.

10. THE GHOSTWRITER

Master Wong is concerned: "We must give that Teh Kuo a place to stay". For these people I am just 'the German'. So caring. So respectful. Always commuting between Pampanga and Quezon City. Over time, it becomes necessary for me to stay near the Taoist temple. Master Wong calls down his wife Natasha from the first floor, where he lives with his family. He orders her: "Go with that German to your old house. He can fix it up, so that he has a place of his own. It will cost us nothing. Let him pay for the renovation."

An unwilling and reluctant Natasha and I go by tricycle to the old-style Filipino house. She inherited it from her parents, her aged mother lives there. The old lady operates a small sari-sari store. It is from the 1950s and has a groundfloor concrete foundation and walls. Onatop is a wooden frame unit, with metal sheet roofing. It is spacious. I decide to live upstairs. There is light and air. Former employees of the temple have stolen door handles, hinges, faucets, screws and baby clothes of the Master's kids. The big windows, facing the street, are broken. The kitchen sink turns out to be a pile of rubble. Sanitary installations like bathtub, shower and toilet are nonexistent. The old house contains no furniture whatsoever. The plywood walls are split open and home to cockroaches (ipis) and mice. The electric wiring is embedded into the wooden beams, which support the roof. Rodents have nibbled on the plastic insulation. The copper wires are laid bare. Add some juice, and the house fires up. The whole unit looks as if being raided (probably was).

I hire a sixty-year old carpentero named Effren. Together, we do all the necessary repairs, turning the house into livable space. We work six-days-a-week from 9 to 5. We put in floor boards, rafters for the roof and window panes. The whole building is infested with termites. The previous owners had invested in solid nara wood beams, but not in carbolineum protectives. Whenever I see a white anay, I begin to freak out. Effren has to restrain me with wires. No running water available. I have to bring water to the house from the Chinese fire station. All expenses come out of my savings - the Master and his wife are overjoyed: Gleefully rubbing their hands upon the stupidity of the 'teh kuo'.

Due to the high costs of hardware and labour, I have to save on food. I become weaker and weaker. Then I catch leptospirosis from the rat piss everywhere. I go down to 50 kilos. I nearly die in the wrecked house, amidst nails, wooden boards and gallons of paint. Life runs out of me through prolonged diarrhea. I refuse to perish, my barbarian genes hum and throb through my skeletal frame. I set myself on a diet of gatorade, to replenish sugar and salt loss. During my five weeks of semi-comatose existence, I have to fight off rats at night. They are young male ones, their teeth are so sharp, that you don't feel them chiseling chunks of meat from your legs and arms. The pain comes later, when flies try to put their larvae into my open wounds. When I am able to walk again, I am reprimanded by Master Wong for my laziness and missing temple dates of joyous festivals. His wife Naty scolds me for being aloof and not paying rent. Their four kids ignore me, due to my gwailo stupidity. And as always - the Master's harpy sister curses me in Hokkienese. I say to myself: "Survive for one year. Don't let them destroy you. This country is hell. If you make it only through this year, you are good. You can make it anywhere." And I persevere. Just to spite them all.

Later I find out, that Master Wong and his family were constantly spying on me. [Probably to thwart many of my criminal activities; like: Whoring with animals, homo parties (bakla bashes), popping pills, impregnating teenage girls, black masses, drug & human trafficking. So sorry, to have disappointed you.] Sometimes, whilst removing rusty nails from the hardwood window frames, I can see the Master out of the corners of my eyes. Holding the hands of his two little daughters. Before I can see him clearly, he ducks away into the shadows. In September, I stop hiring Effren, do the small repairs and painting of the house by myself. I am flat broke. During the

moon festival, I receive wonderful gifts from Master Wong: Mooncakes. At night, I am happy to have some good food. I bite into the pastry and find out that the egg yolks are already mouldy - penicillin for the half-dead German.

Whilst doing reconstruction on Master's house, I have to rewrite his yellow book (the one that brought me to the temple in the first place). The heat is so oppressive, that sweat runs into my eyes and soaks up the paper. I have to buy a typewriter, carbon ribbons and reams of paper out of my own pocket. Later, I have to write his daily columns on Feng Shui for the tabloids. Master Wong appears as 'the foremost fortuneteller of the Philippines' (hula) in TV shows, radio interviews and newspaper features. Due to his heavy rotation in all Filipino media, the temple is doing a brisk business on 'Feng Shui items'. Upon his repeated requests, I begin to design the first metal lucky charms. They become bestsellers. When I am not working on his publications (Feng Shui Digest, Feng Shui books, etc.), I do construction work on his house near Banawe street.

11. HAVE MASTER, WILL TRAVEL

I sit with Master Wong in the MRT from Lan Tau island to Hong Kong central. We change to the double-decker tram destined for North Point. His relatives are waiting there already in a spacious apartment. It is our place to stay for the next weeks. Every morning, Master Wong consults the tong shu (yearly foretunelling almanac), hanging from a metal chain (obviously to prevent theft), on the left side of the small house altar. After digesting the portents for the day, one joss stick is ignited and reverence done to the Thi Kung (house god). Then the fragrant stick is placed into the little brass cauldron below the figurine. The recently affixed 'Happy Chinese New Year' sticker is already frayed, stained and torn at the edges.

Whenever our hosts run out of groceries, one family member is dispatched to drop down to the supermarket below. They even buy cheese for me, but I forget it, hidden deep in the recesses of the fridge. Master Wong, being a HK resident, is in his element. He begins to prepare spicy Hokkienese seafood dishes. The style is equal to Taiwan, but more simplified. My nightmare Hokkien dish is still 'hapi-tastyful king crap yo love all love'. This culinary masterpiece is created from giant crabs (60-70 cm), cooked in a kind of drippy vomit-cheese, noodle-burnt PVC goo. Could the intoxicating fumes of this delicacy have caused the crab winking at me and waving with its pincers? Only Master knows. But today we have prawn dumplings, dipped in chili and bell pepper, formerly soaked in a special soy-curry-coconut marinade. Not sweet: Master uses butter as flavour enhancer.

A few days later, the TV brings out a warning: Typhoon 'Leo' is approaching HK and imminent danger is threatening the former Crown Colony. Soon signal 3 is up, then signal 8 is a 'go-go-go' in the afternoon. Just one look out of the window, makes TV de trop. No people out there. No cars. No sound. The sky over HK has turned into a grey-black-blue canvas, suffocating the city. Clouds stick to it like greasy cotton balls. No air movement. Scary. Master Wong jumps up: "Hello. Hello. Let us go out for a stroll." Imagine HK after a neutron-bomb attack. Buildings and machinery still running - but no human beings. With elastic, optimistic strides, Master walks into the eye of the storm, me in tow.

Our destination for the moment is the 'bookshop under the stairs'. The tiny shop is just a hole in the wall, accessible by stairs going underground. The owner sells used Chinese and foreign books in front of a small shopping centre. The bookseller knows Master Wong, and huddles himself (in anticipation of a big deal) in a dark recess, still uncluttered. Stalagmites of books have grown up from the floor, leaving no real space for browsing. The Master buys a modern 'Black Hat' Feng Shui book. Escaping the book cave, Master sets his sights for the supermarket inside the shopping centre. He develops a craving for dried seaweed waffles. He buys three packs. Chomping down on his fishy delicacy, the flakes (now moist from saliva) stick like dead flies to his gums, teeth and esophagus. Over time the spittle-specks bleed into green stains, giving Master the uncanny appearance of a zombie from the depths of the South China Sea.

Oblivious to his transmorphing, Master smiles and waves to a group of Filipina domestics. Like remnants from a lost civilization, they have their day-off. Meanwhile we have reached the empty foodcourt: "Hello ladies! I am Feng Shui Wong, the expert pun soy hula, oh, oh, from television, talaga! Sexy-sexy, talaga. Walang bula bula!" The Filipinas, who have congealed to a table, now receive Master's green stained appearance in their midst with trepidation. They smile, want to please, but the horror doesn't really leave their faces - and anyway, they have very little contact with their homeplanet Philippines. Working six days a week for very low wages, they are released from their cramped confinements always on a Sunday. Then they frolick in the thousands near the Star Ferry terminal at Victoria harbour. Many are lesbians (feel na feel), due to their understandable urge for human warmth and tenderness. In an alien society, which they experience as a 24/7 penal system. At last, one of the maids has taken pity on Master Wong, helping him to

remove his 'spots'. Later she writes down her address for him, plus handy number. It is time to return to our flat in North Point. The very moment we arrive, we are hit by a cold gust of wind. The first fat black globs of rain hit the silent streets.

After 'Leo' has moved on to other pastures, HK feels cleansed and purified. Pollution being dissolved and deposited into the sea by metre-high waves. We take the MTR to Lo Wu station, then progress into Shenzhen. Our next stop is 'book city', a giant department store displaying 3.5 million books on multiple levels. Later I find out, that the small book shops in Canton are much better equipped, to a fraction of the costs at 'book city'. After a visit to the overcrowded 'tea house' for fortification, we jump the outgoing bus up North. A female officer of the bus transportation company, takes out a video camera. She carefully tapes our faces and seat numbers. "Master, why is this woman videotaping us?", I ask my travel companion. With casual amusement he replies: "Oh, nothing special, really. Just in case, we are later subject to be killed or kidnapped on the coastal highway, the military police can identify our bodies more easily. The videotape stays here in the Shenzhen office."

The bus driver revves up the engine of the brandnew bus and our ride along the coastline of Canton progresses nicely. Our destination is Shan Tou 汕头, 300 km up on the border to Hokkien. Driving along the scenic coast line, I feel the spirits of endless generations of fishermen and farmers reaching out to me. "This had been cultivated land, when the Europeans were still living in caves, and splitting their skulls for the possession of fire", comes to my mind. The very air here at the coast is kind of milky. Kind of opaque. The waters radiate in a tone of greyish aquamarine. The landscape is quiet, no bustling Cantonese, no traffic noise. As if the people would vanish into the past, in the moment our bus approaches. Definitely a magic veil is draped over the coastal country. Like looking through a shard of frosted glass, as if watching the logo of a Shaw Bros. movie. Then the sky melts with the sea - blue grey milk.

During our trip up East, crazy Cantonese deliberately cutting us, by some misguided interpretation of way-of-right, with their varied vehicles. Finally we arrive in the city. The design and style of the buildings reminded me of Budapest. 'Communist Housing Projects create the Modernist City of Socialist's Society Progress'. The tempo of life here is subdued in comparison to Shenzhen. More amiable. The citizens here are curious, yet respectful. More relaxed with a Southern Chinese mentality.

Master and I check into a small hotel for businessmen. Each floor is under supervision by a spy from the Party. How socialist, how comforting, to know that during absence your garbage and travel-cases are carefully 'examined'. The Party concierge confiscates our passports, a common plague they never tell you about in the commercials. She is also the 'keeper-of-the -tea-urn', a huge stained flower-themed thermos bottle. In order to have some tea or coffee in your room, you need hot water. That hot water is governed by the Party. To get your tea-water (or other amenities, like 'young-nice-sexy-sexy-lady-like-visit-you-only-you-for-international-socialist-friendship-goody-good-time'), you have to tip the Party babushka. The more, the better. The Party babushka is always there. When does she ever go to the toilet? I am so tired. I hit the pillow.

Next morning, by warm tea and some crackers, Master asks me for a new design for lucky charms. I take pen and paper and draw the later bestsellers 'Feng Shui Power Set' and 'Four Animal Power Plate'. I make use of the four animals of Chinese mythology to 'trap' good chi and 'repel' bad ominae. Master is obviously satisfied and proclaims: "Now we travel deeper into the country. We will visit exciting porcelain-manufactures. My own porcelain-factories!"

First by tricycle, then by bus, we proceed to 'porcelain village'. Here hundreds of family-workshops turn out millions of figurines for the giant supermarket chains in the U.S. Each family resides in a small South Chinese house, not differing from those of the Ming Dynasty. Near the village are deposits of kaolin, feldspar and silica to make a brown paste. The paste then is poured into a mold. The paste is squashed under pressure and oozes out a new raw figurine. Then the brown figurine is 'baked' in a high-temperature oven. Then coloured glazings are applied by hand.

The whole family is involved in this production process.

When Master and I enter the village, I stumble over broken goblins, frankenheimers, witches, spiders and pumpkins. They are candy containers and didn't make the shipment into walemarket-democracies on time for halloween. As we enter the workshop, we are greeted by 13 people. One family in one room. They welcome us and place us on the best chairs. The rest of them huddle together on a hard wooden bank. Cigarettes and tea in tiny cups dominate the scene. They are all very curious about this gwailo, the first real 'American' they can see and carefully touch. I begin to tell some stories from my travels in the Western countries. About life in Bavaria and America. Like everywhere in China - more and more kids drop in, along with an assortment of dogs and the occasional chicken.

My designs for luxurious lucky charmes impress the younger men of the workshop. They show me their library of tabloid-sized art books on Chinese classical designs. There are dragons, phoenixes, cranes, turtles, tigers and the typical Taoist Immortal sitting on a rock amidst pine trees. I discuss with them the style I prefer, the old-fashioned one. Even Master nods his approval. After more toasts and even more watery tea, it is time to leave this family to their work.

In the afternoon I am in for a special 'treat'. An old friend of Master Wong operates a 'tastyful good restaurant'. The culinary temple turns out to be a concrete garage along a gully. The trench carries the liquid excretions of pigs, humans and unidentifiable beings. We sit under a corrugated metal sheet. The furniture consists of self-made tables and chairs, rusty and in need of paint. The chef of the kitchen is disappointed, because I don't eat. Somewhere, I have lost my appetite. Master is munching happily away, perhaps he needs the smell for a better digestion.

12. THE AMULET - KILLER

Master Wong and I are in jail. Right in Binondo. The Chief of Police of the precinct has invited us, to conduct a Feng Shui survey. Master takes out his lo pan. The needle spins heavily. He declares: "This place is no good. Too much shar chi. You need lucky charmes. Too much bad vibes here in the police station."

A profound analysis and to the point. Our host has just killed a few weeks ago. He hunted and executed personally the notorious 'amulet-killer'. Master and I walk through the rogue's gallery of human depravity - framed newspaper clips, featuring the police action work of one of 'Manilas Finest'. The Police Chief sees himself as the defender of justice and peace in a city, filled with criminal scum. "Yes", the Chief explains to us, "My police work here is a cross I have to bear. You can not imagine this cesspool called Binondo. Taiwanese operating shabu-shabu (crystal meth) labs in the condos here. Taiwanese running the night clubs. Red Chinese running the mahjongg and betting parlors. They bring in girls by the shipload. Now we have Russian & Armenian whores. Blond and tall and the Chinese love them. My police investigative work are the Twelve Stations of the Cross. Amen."

Master points to the pictures, showing the Police Chief in warrior's pose holding up an amulet. "That's the lucky charme of 'Manilas's Public Enemy No.1', the hero elaborates. And: "It was tough. The whole city was on fire. All-out manhunt for this muslim gangster. Pure evil. I tell you. The muslim had his lair right here in Tondo. Protected by his gang members. We couldn't get to him. No little birdies singing for this one. Oh no. They were all afraid of him. Because of his 'magic mojo amuleto'. He drove a tuned-up motorbike. Around his neck - always the brass amuleto, inscribed with arabesques from the Quoran. That made him invincible. No bullet could penetrate his skin. Believe so me, we tried to shoot down that animal. Useless. It seemed he was really invulnerable. Every shoot-out here in town ended in a victory for that piece of crap. Our officers looked like stumble bums in the media - 'Manila's Goofiest'. Something had to be done. He made all Manila policemen look like idiots. When we erected check points and barricades - he just revved up his engine and jumped over our boys."

"The Manilenos began to love him. Kind of a 'Manila Robin Hood'. He gave to the poor. Took from the rich. One night, I had him right in my sight. In front of me. In Tondo. Everybody was afraid to challenge him this very night. Our boys in blue wetted their pants. The muslim challenged me. Called me names in front of my men. Arms akimbo, he taunted me: 'Come, little officer. Shoot me. If you dare, little man. I am invincible!' I approached the enemy No.1. We stood face-to-face. Show-down was inevitable. I knew that. The killer drew his gun. I drew my gun. I shot him right through the amulet. Right into the heart. The gangster was lifted up into the air. He flew five metres, then crashed like a broken poppet into the rotten refuse of a restaurant."

"Amazing", Master and I state in wonderment. I ask the Police Chief: "Sir, how were you able to shoot down this indestructible criminal? Did you use some counter-magic, thwarting the prowess of his wonder amulet?" He: "Simple. I used armour-piercing bullets!"

13. THE CURSE OF THE TWIN - TOWERS

It is a sunny day in Ortigas. I am with my old friend from the U.S., Mr. No. He looks at the skyline with his sunglasses: "They build like crazy here. The city looks kind of prosperous." I reply: "It only looks that way. When you enter one of these stylish skyscrapers, you'll notice that half of the offices are vacant. Makati and Ortigas are just for showing off. No real substance for prosperity here. If they should make some money after all, it is with outsourcing and call-centres. Like in Bombay or Calcutta."

Mr. No is looking for office-space in the financial district of Manila. He is a self-made millionaire and entrepreneur. A well known high-roller in the casinos of the world, he plays occasionally poker with Uncle Hugh in his infamous Payboy-mansion: One hand is holding the cards, the other one a skimpy-dressed Bunnymate. Chomping on a fat Monte Christo, he samples forty-year-old single malt. Uncle Hugh nodding in kinship and approval.

We drive into the back of the biggest shopping mall on EDSA. A nightmare of a design: A hodge-podge of units already constructed somewhere across the archipelago; using decade-old blueprints. It reminds me of the evolution of the human brain: Reptile, mammal and homo neanderthalensis, stacked upon each other. The taxi stops at a twin-tower entrance. "This building comes highly recommended by the Reverend. He is my advisor in the networking business. He insists that we rent here", Mr. No explains.

In the moment the taxi comes to a halt, a servile Chinaman jumps out of the main entrance: "Welcome, welcome, so nice to see you. We talked, right? Mr. No?, right? You are here, right? Come in, right? This is for you, right?" He wants to shake hands with me. No way. Later, again I refuse. Like being buddy-buddy with a minion from hell. The guy, obviously the manager here, is handing out big plastic bags with vitamine-soy-milk capsules to Mr. No. Seduction starts already: "A little welcome gift for my distinguished guest from the U.S., ha, ha, ha." "Looks like the products of the owner of this abomination of a building", goes through my mind, "nobody wants his milk drops, nobody wants his units."

I am familiar with this twin-tower object. There was a time, when I coined the term 'joss-stick-towers'. In my seminars, I cautioned the developers not to proceed with these skyscrapers, due to bad Feng Shui: "The two towers with a pyramid (house of the dead) on top, resemble two joss-sticks for ancestor-worship. They belong to the netherworld, to the 'land of yin'. To develop an archetypical two-incense-sticks highrise, is like invoking the devil 24/7. Done by banana-peel Chinese: Yellow on the outside, white on the inside.

Upon entering the white (!) lobby hall, which is small and looks mediocre, we approach the elevators. We are the only people in the lobby, the reception desk being vacated. We go up to the higher levels. Inside the cabin, Mr. Servile chatters happily away, completely oblivious to the dark atmosphere permeating every corner of the building: "Great here, right? How many years you like to rent, right?" Whilst speeding up, the cabin momentarily jumps. First left and right, then front and back. Then jerky movements up and down. Mr. Servile: "Ha, ha, funny, right? No problem, right? Its not the building, right? It's Meraculpo (local power company), right?" What is evident already in the white lobby, seems to continue on all floors we are inspecting: Shops and offices devoid of carbon-based life forms. We arrive at the 14th floor. The realtor leaves the cabin. Mr. No follows behind. Suddenly, the doors of the lift close in front of him. He steps back. Presses the 'open' button. The doors open, he steps out, instantly the doors are shutting down, trapping me inside. I press the 'open' button. The doors move out, I step forward, the doors close in front of me. One more time: I press the 'open' button, step forward, the doors close shut in front of me. This little game goes on for five minutes: Whenever I want to exit the lift, the doors close up; sealing me inside the cabin. Finally, the doors stay open, I can escape from that cursed box. I look up and down the hallway. Nobody around. I am alone on the 14th floor. No activity. No sounds.

No Mr. No. No Mr. Realtor either. Slowly I walk around. The creepy mood is prevalent here, despite the sunlit hallway. I encounter a purified water shop. A fly speckled poster in the glass window: 'Shop closed. Please call us'. Or don't.

Some faint voices down the hallway. Dust motes dance the sunbeams. Voices again, louder. Then Mr. No and the realtor appear out of nowhere: "Fr. Axel, where have you been? We were looking all over the place for you. What happened?" I reply: "I was here. On this very floor." Both look at me. Unbelieving. Uncertain what to say, or better not throwing any more light on the matter. I sigh and leave it at that. We take the lift and move down to the lobby. The realtor is disappointed, that Mr. No didn't sign on the lease, quite an expensive one for an empty tower. The realtor waves farewell, defeat in his eyes. We step out onto the parking lot, the ugly power-mall in front of us. And yet: Relieved to be released from that cursed twin-tower. From whatever may lurk inside. I advise Mr. No not to rent office-space there. He says: "I agree. Bad ju-ju there. Bad vibes. Have you seen - the whole damn thing is EMPTY?"

One year later. I am with Mr. No out in Ortigas, checking out some restaurants. We let the driver stop in front of an exclusive, trendy restaurant. It is part of a pretentious, upper-class mall with upper-class prices. Twice I did Feng Shui there, during construction in 2000. Mr. No says: "Oh, it's still closed. Still have problems there with the renovation. Something went bad there. But it should be a good one." I direct Mr. No's attention to the back of the restaurant, which is part of the fashion society mall: Like a lighthouse from hell, the joss-stick-towers dwarf the defunct restaurant. "There is your answer", I reply.

14. CHAMBRE D'AMOUR

We are standing amidst thousands of swirling mosquitoes. Master Wong whisks the flying leechers away. Barefoot we wade through knee-high waters, encircling an island of justice: The regional police station of Pampanga. A cold wind blows, all police officers bustling around in warm jackets. The sky is teal, filled with dark grey clouds. The police station is newly built, with white washed walls and the occasional whiff of fresh paint. Water is still standing on the ground floor, huge industrial fans try to dry out the building - useless. The humidity is by 80%, if not higher.

A few hours ago, a call came in on the hotline of the temple: "Help. We need a Feng Shui man. Hurry." We were picked up in Quezon City by an unmarked police SUV, then drove straight to Angeles City. Dau and Angeles hosted the former R & R amenities of the G.I.'s, who abandoned Pampanga in 1991. Due to the eruption of the Pinatubo volcano. When the sex tourists came out of their love hotels, it was snowing: White ash started to pour down onto the population of Pampanga. The sun became obscured for days by smoke, then by grey-black clouds, made of congealed flakes. Cursing the province into a perpetual twilight. It even scared the shit out of the Americans. The white flakes swallowed every sound, the busy erotic city of Angeles turned Christmas-Joy in June.

The Clark Air Base was the biggest employer in the Pampanga region. Hundreds of families, farmers, shops, pleasure girls and boys, were dependent on jobs provided by the Americans. The white ash from the volcano break out, poisoned the farmland and made the region itself inhabitable. The area turned into an alkaline wasteland. During rainy season, the ground morphs into lahar - meaning a mudflow. It is created by a slurry of powdered ash and microscopic debris, which then turns into soapy quicksand. Our vehicle passes through the protective dam construction project of the government. Holding the toxic slime at bay and cleansing the area from the quicksands. This honorable goal is achieved through the amazing feat of 2 bulldozers and 1 truck. In the same moment, the white muck is excavated by the scoop, it is already gelling back. Sysiphus. Here in Pampanga.

Within the Pampangenos' police centre, we listen patiently to the stories and complaints from the officers: "This place is bad, it gives me the creeps, there are sounds at night, I mean, eerie sounds it is always cold here, even in summer, I want to transfer, there is always animosity between fellow officers, sometimes they fight, pull out their guns, like to waste somebody, there is jealousy for position and promotion, no peace here, a station filled with hatred, it looks nice and new, but its rotten deep inside", etc. We inspect the one-storied building carefully. It is just past 2 PM, yet it seems like 6 PM, darkness falls. We look into offices, toilet stalls and storage rooms. The white walls are teeming with thousands upon thousands of mosquitoes. Dark stains in the harsh light of the fluorescent lights. Obviously spawned in the lake outside, generated by stagnant waters left over from recent downpours. The station centred within the lake. Like a white swan waiting for its mate.

Finally we check out the offices of the Chief of Police. A spacious two-room, set with solid narra wood furniture and aircon. Distinguished law-enforcement interior. The Chief is absent, attending to some political agenda in Manila. Very important. Very hush hush. I take my time. I have a feeling, that something is not right here. The second attached room seems somewhat 'cut off'. Puzzled and smiling insecurely, Master asks: "What are you doing there?" I answer him: "Master, there is something missing from this office. There is a secret here."

Master shakes his head in disbelief. I open my third eye. Then I follow with my left hand along the golden trim, bordering to the office walls. I knock around the borders. A hollow sound. Empty space behind. Then I have a picture in my mind: A giant french bed, champagne, a feminine bathroom with rose motifs.

Our driver - obviously the adjuvant of the elusive Chief - looks sheepishly at me. Master Wong

pressures me to leave with him. Suddenly - with a 'pop' - the wall springs open. A secret door is revealed, by pulling a hidden switch under the office table. We step into a luxurious french bedroom with king-size bed, a fridge filled with champagne, tins of caviar, cheeses and truffles. And a decent bathroom. A big aircon, able to cool down heated nookies. Yet the chi here is not the one suggested by the love ambiente. It has a dark, gritty feeling to it. And the odeur of wilted roses. I decide not to investigate any further. Master then recommends certain 'harmony', 'love attractor' and 'repulsory' charmes, available at the temple in Quezon City. When I see the police station receding in the rearview mirror, I begin to feel much better.

15. THE GHOSTS OF WW II

I feel disoriented. I have no idea, why I am sitting in this SUV with Master Wong. Somewhere, along the way to Tarlac, some messages got lost in transition. The weather is dry and cool. I like the atmosphere in December, when the first cold tentacles from the Himalayas reach Luzon. The sky is overcast, a continued grey. Our driver finally approaches some kind of industrial estate. A watchtower is positioned at the main gate. The Filipino inside spots our vehicle from afar and gives the order down to the guards, to let us in. Heavy, corrugated iron doors are pushed back by servile workers.

Upon entering the compound, I notice a power plant to the left. Transmission lines are running into a big cube up ahead. Obviously, we are on the grounds of a factory. Buildings of different sizes and shapes are scattered all over a huge area. Like building blocks, abandoned by a bored child. The buildings are interconnected by streets. I ask Master: "What is this? Where are we?" He replies: "We are doing a Feng Shui survey on a paper mill. The new owners have heavy problems to get the factory going. That's all what I know at the moment." Later, by overhearing discussions between Master and the Filipino owners, I learn, that the factory was built by people from Switzerland. The Swiss builders were flown in, to manufacture high-end paper products, to print bills and bonds. The name 'high-end sheet-stock paper' is misleading. It is solely used to print bills and bonds/certificates. It contains no paper at all, but a mixture of kaolin, linen and cotton. It has the same consistency as your underwear.

We finally meet up with the new owners, who bought the defunct mill. We are in their offices, a row of little houses, where also the staff lives. They are newly built and ready for occupancy. Master Wong takes out his lo pan and measures the fluxus of chi. He shakes his head disapprovingly: "The directions here are unfavorable. The influx of yin-chi is too strong. Why didn't you consult us, before you started construction on these office-buildings?" Silence from the owners. The problem now is to rip out the freshly cemented tiles, and to bury the necessary lucky charms therein. As always, I recommend my Feng Shui Power Set. My universal tool for attracting good fortune. Whilst the workers take out the tiles and mark the spots for additional 'charmes-burial', the lady owner reveals more of the situation: "When the Swiss engineers had a first test run of this mill, sparks flew and the dynamo short-circuited. This had never happened before to the Swiss. They were shocked. They took it very personal - like, you came 17 000 km to give us this kind of junk? After repairs, they started the system again. The machinery sparked, sputtered, stank and died on the spot.

Now the Swiss engineers had to save the mixers, steamers and rollers, which became stuck. The gears, transmissions, cogwheels and mechanical parts seemed to be fried. A darkly goo hardened the moving parts into paralysis. Whenever the Swiss mechanics operated on the electrical system and power transmission, the tormented machinery came to a screeching halt. Then the machines began to wail, like a tortured being. And the wailing never stopped. The Filipinos, who were assisting the Swiss guys, ran away at night. They never reported back to work.

Other Filipinos refused outright to work for the Swiss engineers. The rumor was, that this paper mill, actually everything you see here, was haunted by forces from hell. Finally the Swiss engineers got the machinery going and left for Europe. When the former owners started to run the thing with some trained Manilenos, the whole machine park gave up the ghost. For good. (Up to this point, the whole factory never produced one single shred of hi-end paper. It only incurred losses in millions of US\$, in a fourth-world country, where the concept of toilet paper is known only to the elite.) After that, the plant and compound rotted away. And that is why we could buy the factory for little money."

Master Wong nods his head in profound understanding: "Lucky charms can help you. Lucky charms can save. Luck charms are pre-blessed by the Taoist Minister. For better product

quality." I ask the lady owner: "And when you tried to get the mill going, sparks flew, the machinery was fried - and the wailing sounds started? What exactly happened to the previous owners?" The woman lowers her eyes, depressed and hoping that the lucky charms will do their miracle work. Meanwhile, I have a hunch about what's really going on here. Most of the day we walk around the vast compound. In the back, on a hidden footpath, we find a cult place. A stone idol, facing straight to the power plant. I check the direction of the idol's placement. South-West. The power plant lies North-East. My suspicion was right: 'Kanto ng demonio' - the Devil's Directive.

At this juncture in time, I am flooded with visions of torture and torment. I feel spidery fingers touching me from the world of the dead - softly, like spiderwebs in the wind. It is as if I can hear them calling out to me: "Help us. Remember us. Don't forget us. We are human, like you." I ask Master and the lady to walk the distance with me, towards the power plant. Upon arrival at the plant, I open my third eye and see right below our feet Filipinos writhing and wailing in agony. Buried deep under the topsoil. With my finger outstretched, I point to a certain spot: "Dig right there. Now. Dig." Dumb faces all around me. Incomprehension. Then an older Filipino takes action and brings two boys with groundbreaking shovels. One metre down, they tap into a layer of plywood and junk. At two metres, they excavate the first deep yellow skulls, wonderfully preserved. We find the associated bones and ribcages in good condition. Spontaneously I remark: "These are the dead bodies of tortured Filipinos during the Japanese occupation in this area."

Dead silence around, Master is speechless. I continue: "Are there some oldtimers around, who were here during the 1940s, in WW II?" The elder Filipino goes away and returns some time later with an old man. Lolo says: "Yes. I was just a boy during WW II. This was all Japanese territory. This factory here was the site of a Japanese interrogation camp. The Japanese beat the guerilla fighters here, cut out the babies from the mother's womb. To get intelligence on the hiding places of the Kapampangan and Hukbalahap Communist fighters. These Filipino guerillas fought along the side of the Americanos, attacking retreating Imperial soldiers, until 1945. They were proud people. Proud and strong."

Master and I recommend a Catholic mass to appease the tortured souls under our feet. "This place doesn't need lucky charms", goes through my head, "it needs an exorcism." On our way back to Quezon City, a faint cold fear thrills through my veins. My heart stop. I check today's date: December 8, 2000. On December 8, 1941, the Japanese began their invasion of Pampanga. Bombing Clark Air Base into the ground.

16. THE MULTI - ALIEN GAZEBO

It is Saturday afternoon. A scorcher of a day in May. Monsieur Schlumpf aka 'Smurfy' knocks at my front gate. He is wearing glasses and an old sweatshirt. With long sleeves. He is the proud owner of a small open eatery called 'GAZEBO RESTO' and my neighbour. Sweat runs from his brows: "Do you have some work for me? Business is bad!" Instead of an answer, I go to the fridge and bring him a glass of iced tea, this time it is strawberry. Gratefully Smurfy gulps it down to the last drop: "Boy, that was good. Drop by tomorrow." I promise him to make an appearance.

A few weeks ago, I had met his wife, Lyrica. She stood in the dairy products section of a local supermarket. Checking on price labels for cheeses. (Smurfy likes cheese: "I don't like cheezyweasley coco-oil cheese. It's not healthy and tastes like shit", he comments, whilst lathering cheezyweasley unto his cornbread bun.) Lyrica's apparel would delight any casting director filling the role of a typical witch: Streaky, greasy gray hair, teeth either missing/crooked/chipped, slightly hunched over, a cackling, chattering blend of Tagalog and Schwyzerduetsch. Lyrica is a Filipina grandmother. She runs a kind of school (tutorial) for 'Filipinas With German Boyfriends'. The school is right there in the Gazebo. Lyrica is the 'Professora' of this finishing school. Its curriculum consists of: German language, culture (Beethoven & Goethel), make-up, dressing, shopping, cooking (bratwuerstl and schnitzl), lovemaking & safe sex. Female students can sit in the nipa chairs and bamboo tables inside the Gazebo. Lyrica says: "Our tuition fee is very low. Only 20 000 Pesos. Very low". "Yes", I think, "that's why I never see any students around."

Lyrica's grandson, Charles II, lives with her and Smurfy. Charles is Half - Japanese/Quarter-German/Quarter-Filipino. The mother of Lyrica's grandson, Melody, lives also in the Gazebo. She is 20 years old and Half-German/Half- Filipina. Everyday, Melody works the early shift at the local call-centre. Melody's son Charles II is the product of a techno-dance-ecstasy with a Half-German/Half-Japanese guy back in Berne. The Jap Nut became obsessed with Melody during her pregnancy. He wanted to cut out the baby from her womb - with a fruit knife. Just to have his son around. ("He loves his son so much", Melody tells me, "that is why mom and I and little Charles left our Sugardaddy in Berne. That's why we want to live here with Mom's new lover, that Smurfy.")

Fearing for her life, she applied for social service's support in Switzerland. The case workers recommended a new flat. Useless. The 'Nippoman Nut' followed Melody all over town; 24/7. He dialled up Melody; 24/7. Then they put a restraining order on him. Ineffective. The Jap Nut didn't care - his honor was involved.

Lyrica was married in Berne with Sugardaddy. He is Melody's father. He paid for Lyrica to come to Switzerland. But Lyrica wanted more: Bringing over her whole family from the Philippines. One by one. Sugardaddy said: "NO WAY". That's when Lyrica and Melody started to hate Sugardaddy. Lyrica was looking for a new lover and found Smurfy. Melody looked for a new lover and found the Jap Nut.

Smurfy went once to Peru. There he married a Peruvian woman. She lived on a dusty mesa. When Smurfy approached her little hut, she swang her left hip and said: "Hello, stranger. What can I get you?" He impregnated her and got two strapping Half-Peruvian/Half-Swiss boys. The boys began to hate Smurfy, because he didn't shell out enough dough for computer games. Not enough allowance. Smurfy was fighting with the Peruvian woman, which he brought to Berne. Then the Peruvian woman found another guy, another Swiss man. Smurfy has to pay alimony to the Peruvian woman and his two sons. But he loves Lyrica and Melody so much. That's why he sold his inherited house in Berne. His two sons each got 100 000 Fraenkenli in cash, his Peruvian wife a little more. Now Smurfy is bankrupt in the Philippines. Bankrupt with a Gazebo inside a subdivision: "Welcome, Welcome, to our Multi-Gazebo."

Smurfy confides in me: "I never leave the Gazebo. I don't know Manila. I don't know Baguio. I

don't know anything about the Philippines. Lyrica and her family brought me here to this place. I am the chef cook here at the Gazebo." He finishes his cheezyweasley bun. He jumps up and exclaims cheerfully: "Let's listen to military marching bands. That's so uplifting." He starts to crank up his stereo system, and - nothing. His sound apparatus just gave up the ghost. I go over to my place. Upon returning, I present him with a brand-new stereo-karaoke system. Smurfy's face brightens. We plug in the cables and Smurfy salutes his invisible comrades in arms. He continues his tale: "Actually I am a tattoo man myself. I am militarized, you know. I went to a Catlick's boarding school. There I learned many things. Then I went to the French Foreign Legion. In the desert, I fought for the French. It was so amazing. The sun burnt me. It was hell. But I survived all these trials and tribulations. I began to study naturopathy in Zuerich. I became a naturopath, homoeopath and chiropractor." Proudly Smurfy shows me his diploma on display.

All the time I am with Smurfy, he never takes off his sweatshirt. He smokes two to three packs of dark, unfiltered cigarettes a day. In the heat of the kitchen. The kitchen itself is actually an extension of the small basic one-storied house, prevalent in this subdivision. Before the extension, the septic tank was OUT of the house. Now it is INSIDE. The kitchen is located in the North-East, which denotes bad Feng Shui. When Smurfy makes his famous hamburgers, he stands firmly onatop the shit hole. Wonderfully, the shar chi is transferred from the tank into the burger patties: "I cook with love. You can taste it." Sure. Whilst I am awaiting Smurfy's culinary burgers, I use my heavy cornbread bun (handmade by my host) and shoot it - as a ballistic missile - at the cat from the adjacent vacant house. Smurfy's neighbours went sick, divorced and left the building one year ago. A big concrete post is positioned directly in front of their main entrance door, cutting thereby one half of Smurfy's residence.

Now Smurfy is serving the Sunday dinner. It is cooler now in the Gazebo. We eat schnitzel and baked potatoes. Warm colaloca is served, it foams instantly up my throat and spills over the potatoes: "Oh, so sorry for that. Lyrica does not approve of refrigerated cola." Melody comes down from her room, joins us with little Charles II. Conspiratorially, she leans over to me: "You know, it is only because of your visit, that we get some good food here, like schnitzels. Otherwise we would eat now rice, fish and bananas. I have to feed the whole bunch here from my income at the call-centre. These assholes have no income at all. Without me, they'd have gone already back to Berne, to apply for social security. A nice, sunny Sunday afternoon with the Swiss, here in the tourist capital of the Philippines.

17. THE FLOATING HOUSE

I am standing in the limelight. A big audience in front of me. Filipinos from all walks of life have been assembled here by heavy advertising. The people sit in the household appliances section of a big shopping mall in Cebu. Master Wong and I were flown in today from Manila, to give lectures on 'Feng Shui Luck'. The lucky charms of our temple are on display everywhere, with a special discount for today's attendees. After finishing my lecture, I give out short-cut horoscopes for over 300 people. The crowd rushes me, fencing me against the wall of the department store.

In the afternoon, Master and I are invited to do a Feng Shui reading in a beautified residential area in Cebu. Owned by wealthy Chinese. They complain about loss of income, sickness and financial instability. The house itself is open into all four directions, surrounded by lush gardens. The doors are wood framed with glass panels. Every window is open. A gentle breeze from the sea circulates. Everything should be fine - but it is not. I step out and open my third eye: Chi flows out of the house. Happy dust motes of chi fly into the open building, circulate in the living-room and leave instantly through its orifices.

"This house has too many mouths", I remind myself, "so in the end, every mouth has no food." The live-giving yang chi can not be contained within. I confer with Master on this problem and he agrees to do something about it: "We will now apply a secret formula from my grandfather." Master Wong requests from the owner two boys, a shovel and cement. Taking up his lo pan, he conducts several readings on the heavenly disc, alternating his positions in the courtyard. Suddenly, he stops and identifies a certain spot. Considering the four doors/sides, he selects the main door. Pointing with his hand to a location under the house, the boys start digging. A hole is being made. Master blesses the porcelain lucky charms, which contain unique metal charms for enhancement. Master hands now the charms to the owner. The owner carefully places the items within the hole and cement is poured over the auspicious objects. Sealing the Feng Shui formula.

In the moment Master activates the lucky charms, my third eye pops up. I see the porcelain charms contracting, then expanding. Faster and faster. Like a heart pulsating. I exclaim: "Master, that item is alive. It breathes. It pumps."

But Master just smiles knowingly: "That old fox knows exactly what he is doing", goes through my mind. Then, when the formula is sealed deep under the house, the damned thing starts to radiate. Like the fan of a rainbow-peacock, coloured beams protrude through the foundation into the courtyard. I can't believe, what I am seeing here. The overall impression is, that the whole house floats on coloured air, like sitting on an inflatable raft. Or some rainbow-cloud.

Tonight we are invited for dinner by our gracious female host. Her residence is a multistoreyed villa, built into the rocks overlooking the beach. Gardens and gazebos are placed outside, allowing to dine and wine under the moonlight. The fragrance of bougainvilleas waft along with a cool breeze from the sea. After Filipino food is presented, I decline and I sit with Master Wong on bamboo chairs, taking in the scenic atmosphere.

Master is in a good mood tonight, and he reveals some anecdotes from his turbulent past in Hokkien: "I come from an old lineage of Taoist priests. For generations my family had been appointed the leading ritual masters in Amoy and the surrounding villages. One of my ancestors was the Master of Ghost Valley 鬼谷先生, who wrote the bestseller with the same name. Our family was very strict, always learning and working.

Very conservative, too, because we had to be a shining example of virtue and saintliness to others. I was a naughty boy, perhaps still am (chuckles). I remember vividly the hard times in Southern China. Chairman Mao enforced the 'Great Leap Forward' political engine, that was around 1958. Fishing and farming were collectivized, so nobody really liked to work for the Party. We Southern Chinese are very proud and independent, different from the Han in Peking. And it came, that the

CPC forced us people to work in professions, we never had learned, or even more, despised. But the Party officials were merciless, running contradictory to everything a Chinese family holds sacred. Many people died from homesickness. Husbands and fathers were torn from their families and transplanted into an agro-economy, hundreds, if not thousands of miles away. Others died during those dark days, due to mismanagement of foods, faulty distribution and storage. Thus I became very sick. My life was hanging on a thread."

"My father had no interest to become a Taoist priest. He was a businessman, always on the road. His great dream was to immigrate to the Philippines to start a new life. Thus my grandfather became my Taoist teacher. Due to my sickness and fragile bodily constitution, I was able to see other worlds through the veil. At night, lying in bed, I perceived spectres and schemes from the other side. I was scared. I didn't like it. I wanted to run around and play games like the other boys. Because I was so frail, I started to read books at home. I was always smart, learning just enough to pass the examinations. Because of my connection with the ghost-world, ladies from the neighbourhood began to ask me for advice. I started to locate misplaced keys and valuable items. I also made spiritual contacts between our neighbours and their deceased relatives. Over time I became quite popular as 'the little angel who can find lost souls (and money)'. This pleased my Taoist grandfather enormously."

"Finally my grandfather decided, it was about time to instruct me personally. So we went into the country, whenever I had some time off. It also meant to get some good food out there. The first thing my gramps taught me, was to find the pole star at night. The secret pivot of Taoism is the North Star. Everything depends, everything hangs upon the North Star. When you die some day, your Star Body follows this Luminary to HEAVEN. I became fascinated. The next star lore revealed to me was the Big Dipper 北斗星. Then I was forced to read all the old classics, like Lao Tzu 老子, Chuang Tzu 莊子, Lieh Tzu 列子, etc. Boring stuff for me. I liked more the books about politics and intrigues at the Imperial Court. That was much juicier. Yet my grandpa insisted on heavy reading, because my father definitely wouldn't continue the tradition. Next on my curriculum was tai chi chuan, chi kung and herbalism."

"Then I had to study Feng Shui, based upon the I Ching. Grandpa and I walked the country. Over time, I was able to identify the chi-fluxus in rocks, rivers and lakes (dangerous). On one of our outings, we encountered a tiger. The beast was stalking us. My grandfather told me to blank out every emotion, every thought, every movement. I had to imagine, that I am melting into the tree next to me, vanishing as a human being. My grandfather pushed me gently out of the downwind, not putting human scent into it. After a while, the tiger disappeared into the dense underwoods. At night we stayed in a cave. I learned to make fire without smoke. It stank terribly. Either from bandits or animals, I don't know. At night, vampire bats came. Silently, you can not hear them. Their leather wings are soft as silk. They like fruitjuice and little animals, like frogs, lizards and fat beetles."

"To learn Taoist practices was of course forbidden. So you had to do it in private. I must say, that Taoist artifacts, ritual manuals, and orally transmitted teachings survived much better here in the South of China. Peking always considered us Southern Chinese as filthy witch-doctors and insurrectionists. Everybody under One Heaven 天下 and being Han Chinese 漢人 considers everything else inferior. That was our advantage in the South - far away from Peking. After I had mastered high-school and Grandpa's Taoist curriculum, he put my name up for consideration with the local State Office For Religious Affairs. It is run by the Party. For each one of the 22 provinces of China, only two students are allowed to enter Taoist Professional College. Located at the White Cloud Monastery in Peking. So for Hokkien it was me and another comrade. Thus one day I said goodbye to my family and went to boarding school at the Monastery in Peking. The teachers were very strict. They were teaching basic Taoist knowledge, in the Complete Perfection School 全真 tradition. We had to study an eclectic mixture of Kung Fu Tzu-ianism (that's what the Party wanted anyway), Buddhist teachings and Taoism. After two years we had to pass examinations. Then we

were given a document, which was actually a permit from the Party to practice Taoism as a priest. If you had such a permit, you were good. If not, and they caught you, you were in big trouble and expedited to a labour camp."

"Now I was legally a Taoist Master and practiced religion in our family and clan temples. Then my father went to Hong Kong. Then from Hong Kong to Manila Chinatown. When he passed the border from Hokkien to Canton, they confiscated all our family ritual manuals of the Eight Lucky Saints, our Taoist diplomas, the history of our clan since the Han Dynasty, ritual seals and garments. My father was so angry, so disappointed in the Communist government. At that time, I was too young to comprehend, what had happened to my father at the border. But it still hurts me."

It is late now. The surf is rolling onto the beach below. The chattering of the guests has died down to low talk. Master Wong and I sit quiet, enjoying this time in suspension. A meteor shower streaks across the fading stars, landing somewhere, creating a new 9-star-continuum somewhere in the world.

18. THE HAUNTED BANK

Our banca jumps through spraying waters. The sky has turned steel-grey with bubbly taffy-pink clouds. The air is laden with iodine and salt. Temperatures have dropped down to 70 degrees. Master Wong and I are on an outrigger boat, destined for Puerto Galera. The island is a tourist spot and easy to access from Manila via Batangas port.

It is late afternoon, when we anchor in Sabang. Cold raindrops drive us into our hotel. The Tropicastle. Its owner - an Austrian expat - has whipped up a dark foreboding castle, towering over Sabang beach. The freaky Tropicastle is slapped onto a hill, a serpentine road leads up to it from the strip. Imagine a hodgepodge between Frankenstein-, Neuschwanstein- and Chateau Marmont-castle in L.A. county. A huge water-tank points directly at a bank on the left below. The bank is the reason why we are here on this island.

Next morning, Master and I start our Feng Shui survey at the bank. The president greets us amicably. He shows us the two-storied building, which is construed right into the hill. The surrounding areal is not developed and overgrown with shrubs. Whilst we examine the interior of the commercial building, I can sense waves of dark, ominous chi (shar chi). This dark chi pulses like waves against and through the offices. The design of the building is modernist, with sharp metallic angles. It is completely covered with blue repellant glas panels. This contemporary style is ugly and does not harmonize with the immediate environment. If one samples the chain of 'discos' along the beachfront, with its hundreds of pleasure girls, and follows the strip right up here, one lands directly in front of the bank. "My first pleasure-girls-bank survey", I note, "And here are some of those sexy girls sitting, applying for a micro-finance-loan. Like sweet chicks on a roost."

Master Wong has returned to Manila. I take my time to conduct a more thorough investigation. I am intrigued. The offices of the bank are either too big or too small. Therefore the chi is either too cramped or too scattered. I definitely don't like that water tank from the Tropicastle. It can fall anytime down onto the bank. It just needs a good typhoon. Opposite of the modern bank building, is a traditional storefront. Made up of different kinds of shops. Small cottages are for rent in the back. Housing ancient expats from Germany, who live out the rest of their lives here. The cottages are nicely done and set into shrubs and flowers. Along the serpentine road, street lamps are painted azure. The same colour is used for the storefront, facing the bank. Taking the blue glass panel covering of the bank into account, the stores feed of the money (water) from the bank: The neighbour 'steals' prosperity 24/7.

In the back of the bank is a huge white wall. A series of open-ended tubes are ensconced within this concrete fortification. It is intended to protect the bank from landslides, excreted by the Tropicastle above. "Shot in the back by a rifle battery", I surmise. Later I check with the president and he confirms, that business drops between June and September, the rainy season. Then the tubes spill excess water straight into the back of the building, flooding it. The management doesn't like to change the wall's colour to green, but agrees to paint green petals around the six dozen of pipes.

It is a warm, humid evening. I have dinner with Wastl (the owner of the bank) and his facility manager, Klaus. The owner leaves our table to discuss with his engineer the technical application of a quattro-copter transport to Sabang. The engineer is a guy from Saarlouis, who specializes in fecal matter treatment. In the German club in Manila they call him 'Doc Shit'; because over a couple of brewskies he tells everyone 'how to intelligently industrialize shit'. Tonight he develops a quattro-copter to enable Wastl to fly directly from his office building in Malabon to the bank here in Sabang. Wastl seems very impressed with the designs for this 'one-man-vtol' as shown on Doc Shit's laptop.

Then, alone with Klaus at the dinner table, overlooking Sabang beach, he tells me some interesting background stories: "You know, during the construction of the blue bank, some

unexplainable things happened. Some might call those 'supernatural' events. Whatever. At night, when we foremen and labourers sat together around a barbecue, sudden fights broke out between the Filipinos. The spouses of our workers frequently showed up after 10 PM, used abusive language and literally dragged their hubbies away from our party. During the workshift, labourers collapsed into a state of catatonic sleep and just dropped off the cliff. Or from a scaffold. This caused a lot of negative sentiment amongst the crew. Accidents and mishaps were frequent and became over time 'part-of-the-job'. What was strange, was, that the inflicted wounds didn't heal. Flies started to lay their larvae into the fresh bloody cuts. Over time, fly-blown workers had to be substituted for fresh guys. One night, one of our workmen was stabbed to death onatop the cliff. Under some shrubs there. Killed by a 'shadow'. Whatever that means."

And Klaus continues his tale: "Another guy, also stabbed at night, survived, heavily stitched up. In my opinion, it were the pleasure girls and the drugs (shabu shabu), who were the cause of all that. Being hungry, the sex girls came to our parties right off the discos. We fed them chicken and boozed them up. Some had diseases, which let our workers 'drip' from Venus. During construction, the cliff crashed down onto the building site, burying labourers and foremen. Everything was covered with slimy mud. This event caused so much fear and resentment amongst the workforce, that most of our guys quit rightaway. Later I heard from some old fart living in the neighbourhood, that our site was cursed. It was used mostly as a ritual area for the old 'rice-god-religion' (paganism) in the times of Marcos. Knowledgeable Elders tried to stop the construction of the bank building, but the government and the mayor just laughed it off. With terrible results, as I can personally testify to. The site never had an exorcism, nor a blessing."

Next morning I am up and start to check out en detail the insides of the blue bank. Descending into the money vault, I can once again sense the pounding of the waves against the foundation. The air in the vault is mouldy and salty. The chi prevailing in the basement is yin, which means attracting ghosts and beings from the netherworld, like a lighthouse: "Hey, Come one, come all!" I had brought a framed picture with me from Quezon City. Into the back of the picture I have placed a formula of metal lucky charmes. The arrangement of the charmes generates a Metaphysical field, which counterbalances the negative pounding of the sea. I open my third eye, because my lo pan is useless 'down yonder'. I find the right spot on the concrete wall and fix the picture onto it. (Checking up later on the vault, the employees report, that the white seaweed lady and other haunting spectral forms have vanished. Also the weeping noise can not be heard anymore.)

My last duty for the bank, is to bury a porcelain lucky charm container in front of the main entrance door. Inside, I place another metal lucky charme formula, to amplify the prosperity of the institution. All items implemented there, have been blessed by me on the altar of the Eight Lucky Saints in our temple.

Some years later, I receive a call from Wastl, the owner of the haunted bank. He transferred his holding company to the component city of Malabon. Meanwhile, he has rented two floors in an office tower, near the Tinajeros river. Business is not forthcoming. So they downsized daily operations, closed down the upper floor and laid off 130 employees. Finally, the remaining staff works out from a handful of offices. An island for castaways. Aside from this lighted isle, the rest of the floor (including the upper one), is shut off from electricity and disemboweled of furniture. Just a dirt-empty floor. After checking the two floors, I coin the name 'ghost city' for the premises. Yin chi prevails and attracts all kinds of creepy things from the dark beyond. The employees complain about white ladies, spooks, strange weeping sounds, and 'eyes who watch in the dark'.

The first thing I notice upon entering the offices, are the two big bronze lions. They are positioned on both sides of the glass panelled main entrance. Both face outward against a marble tiled wall. Lions should never be put up within an office building. The installation is permitted if - on rare occasions like at HSBC in Hong Kong - they have a very definite and limited purpose. They can only be handled and positioned by a Taoist priest. Fortunately, the two lions are NOT activated.

I make a note, to calculate the exact date and time for the removal of the lions and storage facilities.

I add to that some paper lucky charms for protection of the movers, because lions can turn nasty being handled in a wrong way.

The island of offices is dark and the chi stale and unmoving. I recommend a string of lights to 'elevate the chi' in the hallways. It is about time to do an exorcism and blessing ritual in 'ghost city'. So one day at 10 AM, I assemble the whole staff. Attired with vestment and spiritual bell, I lead a procession of management and employees on a tour through the remaining offices. They carry each three joss sticks. From my 'wizard's pouch' I throw coloured candies. After the purification of the 'island offices', it is now time to cleanse the vast 'ghost city' area. I ring my bell and burn lucky charms of our Eight Lucky Saints 暗八仙, the famous Eight Power Tools. Coloured candy from my secret pouch. Whilst I am going through my Taoist routines, the temperatures drop. From summer heat (April), down to dry coldness (December). A wind is blowing, but no windows/doors are open to create a draft. Suddenly, I feel the mood of the group shifting towards anxious apprehension. Filipinos start to pray the 'Hail Mary'. The smell of sulphur and human waste wafts in. Flies appear out of nowhere. Candles flicker, joss sticks waver. Some kind of screeching noise is to be heard, followed by a wailing sound echoing through 'ghost city'. Some of the staff moan and quiver.

Then a loud 'bang', as if an anvil has been dropped to the floor. One of our group, a technician, investigates. He returns and says: "No more electricity on our two floors. Seems like the transformer burnt out." Indeed. The main transformer - housed in a special room - is beyond repair. Fat acrid smoke wafts through 'ghost city'. Rubber insulation is burning. The batteries in the server room have kicked in.

For two days there is no electricity available in 'ghost city'. When the bill arrives, Wastl gnashes his teeth: "That was an expensive blessing!"

19. THE CASE OF THE MURDERED MAID

I am on the road with a camera team from a local TV station. They want to prove to an eager Filipino audience, that I am a fraud. ('How can a German guy be better than a Tsinoy Feng Shui Master, diba? F*** those foreigners, damned!') I like the friendly ways of the Filipinos. As a witness, I bring with me Brother Hormel, an old fellow of our temple. He is heavy into 'healing mushrooms'. I'm never sure if he means the smoking type, but I wouldn't put it past him. The lady journalist makes stupid conversation. I like the camera-operator much better. He is quiet guy and knows what this is all about. We drive up into the more affluent subdivisions of Quezon City. We stop at a house, surrounded by a wall. We alight and I ask the reporter: "What do you want from me?" She: "Just do your damned job. Do your thang, whatever. I don't care."

As we enter the house, an effeminate Filipino welcomes us. So heartily. So honest. He is a bakla (homosexual). (As a priest and psychologist, I am quite familiar with the pain and rejection of my bi- or homosexual clients. But to flaunt being gay like a weapon against ordinary heteros, is something I do not tolerate. If you are gay, do what you want, as long as you don't trespass on the rights of heteros.) The bakla puts on a faux smile: "Hello, my friend. My good friend. Please look around my humble home. I am renting here only. Just feel free, OK?" Being a professional I keep my mouth shut. Just do my job. Just wait for more external sensory information coming in. Shutting out all the psychological undercurrents here, the pretentiousness of it all.

I ask these people to come out into front of the house. I spin my Feng Shui tale, moving from the premises into the building. I walk along the neighbourhood, the periphery and point out several Feng Fhui violations. Tape rolls, Brother Hormel chews happily on some gigantic brown mushrooms. Then we move back into the house. Whilst crossing the main door step, my third eye opens up and sends an image of brutal force, of evil. I store it away for further use. Then I make a snakeline through all the rooms, follow the Metaphysical trail of viciousness. During my investigation, I recommend certain lucky charmes (anting-anting), to counter the Feng Shui threats. At the end of my survey, we are back in the living-room. I feel dark slimy tentacles of malice still attached to the room itself, to the furniture. Brother Hormel is not impressed. The bakla is nervous, apprehensive. The reporter lady fakes interest. The camera guy just tapes along. Suddenly a vision pops into my mind. I utter: "Here. Right here in this room. Here on the floor. Something bad happened, Blood. Violence." The faces around me fall off. "Bingo!", I think.

Now the lady reporter reveals: "You are right. A murder was committed here. Three months ago. We never told you anything about this house. Right here on the carpet, a maid was stabbed to death. Thiefs cracked the doors, oblivious to the maid still inside the house. She retired early. Thus no lights were on. The burglars were searching for cash and valuables. Stirred by the ensuing noise, the maid woke up and challenged the thieves. Wired by shabu-shabu, they felt being exposed. In the spur of the moment, they cut her up with a kitchen knife. They left her for dead. The maid, mortally wounded, was able to crawl through the open door. Weakly shouting for help, then she perished on the doorsteps. In a pool of blood."

After this illuminating speech, I've had it with these people. I indicate Brother Hormel that it is time to go back to the temple.

20. NOON TIME GHOSTS

"STOP THE CAR! NOW!", I shout. I am in pain and it's getting worse by the minute. We are speeding down South Luzon Expressway (SLEX). At point Alabang Viaduct. Invisible forces gripping my body, shaking me up physically. "Am I losing my marbles? Is this really happening to me or am I going nuts?", runs through my feverish mind. Then. Again. Something jumps me from nowhere. Pushes me down into the back seat. The gang I am with, looks at me as if I am destined for the nearest mental institution. "We can't stop now, Father; no shoulder here. Have to drive through. So sorry", our driver exclaims hastily. To our left below pops up the Happy-Mall. "Far out", I mumble, "a lot of multo (ghosts) here." Again a hit from the left. I begin to shake, shivers running up and down my spine.

We are on our way to the Fido-Mall in Alabang. My host sits beside me, a lady editor. She picked me up in Ortigas, where are the offices of her lifestyle-magazine. For the rich and famous. She does a promo today, in a fashionable mall. I am serving there as a Feng Shui consultant and official mascot for 'living in luxury & style'. The editor looks at me. She catches me off guard with her input: "You know, actually it makes a lot of sense, you here writhing and moaning. This expressway is built on thousands of Filipino corpses. Never reburied, never properly blessed. They just razed the tombstones, leveled off the cemetery. To save money. The whole area on the left is filled with graveyards. Munti is famous for it."

"So that was it", I think, "that's why I freaked out in the car." Like the high-noon witch, who claims her victims in broad daylight, I am attacked by aggressive spirits down yonder the highway. Perfect. It's the first time for me to drive down to Alabang. On this abominable road. Later I learn about freak crashes, involving mostly livestock, like hogs and poultry. And the occasional busload of poor Bicolanos. Now - down right - appears the futuristic meat factory. A hospital for affluent Asian medical shoppers. After passing the meat factory, I feel better. When we reach the Fido-Mall, I eat and drink something to revive my talents for telling wind and water.

The Happy-Mall, which triggered my freak-out, has an interesting history. It is part of the urban legends of the Philippines. The mall is erected on bad karma property, belonging to New Bilibid Prison. The eminent penal capital of the archipelago. 1941 saw its full operation, 1942 the Imperial Army took over. The compound was used for captured POW's. Romushas (Asian slave labourers) were also interned there, then forwarded on hell-ships bound for Taiwan and Japan. (In 2014, the conditions in Bilibid have deteriorated. Muntinlupa City's biggest cash-cow now houses 25 000 inmates, built initially for 8700.)

The Happy-Mall is haunted by ghosts and apparitions in broad daylight. Shopkeepers report of merchandise vanishing in a milky haze before their very eyes. Shoppers tell stories about items they never bought, never intended to buy; appearing in their bags at home. Little kids and lovers are disappearing during photo shootings, subject to be picked up hours later at the lost & found - counter. The lady's toilets are visited by spectral male 'peepers', who show a clean interest in dirty female underwear. Poor Manilenos are unburdened of their fat wallets, by sinister ghostly-invisible pickpockets, cash and credit cards transbeamed instantly into limbo.

21. DUENDE RESETTLEMENT

It is a fine sunny morning in May. Cool winds blow over from Manila Bay. Master Wong and I are doing a blessing ceremony for a condominium tower on Taft Avenue. We prepare a table with foods, joss-sticks urn and lucky charmes. The local politicians, investors, businessmen and press have arrived. The dignitaries are doing the groundbreaking, cameras are flashing. Whilst the assembly chatters happily - fortified by single malt - I sneak away. Walking across the construction site, I notice the heavy traffic and noise level on Taft. One of the busiest major road thoroughfares in Malate. In those days, the LRT (Light Rail Transit) had not yet destroyed its Feng Shui.

Over the years, I collected data on the devastating effects of the concrete support structures, carrying the rails of the transit system. Firstly, the rails are laid out in one single strip, cutting the little 'growth chi' there is. Straight railways generate shar chi. The shops and manufactories under the LRT suffocate: From the exhaust of cars passing by and from the speedy wagons. They are cutting off accumulation of 'shopper's chi' (the chi which is necessary, so that one stops and browses the merchandize on display). Talking to my clients, they all complain that business goes down, right AFTER the LRT line is established.

Shoppers pass through, but they don't buy. The overhanging concrete structures cut off the sunlight, a permanent twilight ensues. Creating a feeling, that heaven falls down anytime. In those days without LRT, people shopped where they lived. Thus even 'ugly' streets had sunlight and did moderate sales to survive. What the network of LRT's generated, were nodal points which connected shopping malls with each other. Nowadays people don't say: "I go to Santa Mesa". They say: "I go to Mally Mall." (And those people have no money at all, to spend in a mall.)

When the LRT began to cut transfer times to a bunch of minutes between mall-nodalities, all other businesses under the railway became obsolete and forgotten. As laudable as the idea might appear, decreasing the number of vehicles and increasing inner city fluidity, by application of mass transit systems - it flopped badly. Unable to put the LRT down into the earth (due to the fact that Metro Manila is built on soggy salt marshes or swamp land), the LRT is too exclusive and too expensive for most Filipinos. At night the terminals are the breeding ground for crime (hold ups), sex (rape, prostitution) and drugs (shabu-shabu).

Whilst strolling along the construction site, I notice several small bushes, trees and shrubs. I hear a faint tinkling, like tiny bells. The tinkling sounds emanate from the plants which are still standing. I open my third eye and switch to 180 degree hunting vision. In augmented reality mode, I sense at the periphery little bubbles of energy, vibrating like rubber balls. Like tumbleweeds. Suddenly, my visual processing reveals tiny people, dwarfs, actually. "Oh, duende are here", I say to myself. I walk to the group of attendees and meet Master Wong: "Master, there are duende here. To avoid future accidents, mis-adventures/haps and bad luck, I advise to build a small house there for the elfish beings. When construction starts, the duende will lose their homes within the plants on site. The workers should also do offerings, food and drinks on a daily basis." Master Wong agrees and the construction company erects a small nipa bahay (straw hut) on a pedestal. Needless to say; everything is well, what ends well.

22. 13 CHAIRS

Master Wong and I are standing inside the most disgusting living-room. It is located on the second floor, overlooking a busy market scenery. I've never seen anything like this. A stone-walled koi fishpond, taking in half of the available space. A small waterfall. The air humid and fetid. In the other half, a rectangular table with 13 empty chairs, reminiscent of King Arthur's court. . Missing out only on the fanfares. Designed by a Mormon FS Master from Utah: "Yeah, high FS export, Yeah".

Our client is a lady, married to a decorated ex-Police Chief. During the construction of the newly-improved sala (living room), the Chief received a bullet in the head, leaving him a vegetable. He resides right below the koi pond. Mounted to a wall, is a tiny color TV, his sole provider for access to the human race. Spoon-fed by the maid with rice-gruel, three times a day. The lady chatters away, insecure, unsure what to say, what to do, what to feel: "Yeah, he is that good. That Mormon FS export." Would be better to kick us out. Because she only admits us to her 'fast-track-FS-money-maker-living-room', due to the incessant pleas of her sister. The sister is very concerned about this 'FS crap from USA': "Could you check out her newly constructed house and interior design? I am worried. Since she installed all this shit, she is in deep financial trouble. Please!"

If Master Wong wouldn't be here with me, I'd walk out. Right away. I do this occasionally, when I find out, that I am being played. Experience taught me the hard way, not to accept every client, only to turn a fast buck. Clients lose respect, when they notice, that you are as dishonest as they are. If you fake FS recommendations, just to sell some left over 'prosperity items'. To pacify their shame and guilt. What they will never, ever, admit. Asia. Professionalism in FS is a two-way street: If I am going to help you, at least you can be honest with me. If you don't like to have your FS read - fine. No problem. But at least don't waste my time and money. So: Here is somebody, who is so smart and rich, that she wants to MAKE EVEN MORE MONEY with Feng Shui. And in the end, she fucks up so badly, accrues so much bad karma in the process, that the only way to redress abuse and seek absolution - is to call us. And not even by herself - her servant sister has to do the job. Against the advice of high 'Mormon FS export' from Utah.

The three-storied half-residential/half-commercial building, in which we do our survey, was built only recently. It stands on an irregular shaped plot, at the corner of a busy main road. The lower rooms are turned into shops for snacks and school supplies. One half of the building is reserved for the lady's family residence. The residence itself is subdivided into small, cramped rooms (including the sick room of her husband, the former Police Chief). All floors are connected via a dangerous narrow staircase. The 13 chairs and the koi pond are aligned on a NE--SW axis, which bodes ill fortune for the occupants (kanto ng demonio). Whilst Master Wong recommends a wide and expensive assortment of lucky charms (anting-anting and pang-kontra) from our temple, I take a closer look at the 13 chairs. Musing deeply, my third eye begins to reveal a scene from around midnight: 13 ghosts take a seat on 13 chairs. Before Master and I depart, I tell the lady, that she sends out an invitation every night to the ghosts roaming the vicinity: "Here are 13 chairs, come and have a seat."

23. THE RED COMMODORE

Today I am in Makati. On Ayala Avenue. It is a balmy Saturday afternoon. I am here to check Doc Sharmaine's apartment. She works at the Australian Embassy. The twin condominium towers are generously laid out, no apartment under 300 sqm. Finest wood parquet flooring. Doc Sharmaine - like most foreigners - lives in her own luxurious world, congregating with the same assholes from her country, she fled from in the first place. People like Doctora have no contact with the real fourth world here in the archipelago. If I talk about my experiences traveling from Aparri to Zamboanga, they shake their coiffeured heads in disbelief. Why am I here? Ah, yes, ghosts in her condominium. "You know, Father, at night I can not sleep. There are sounds, like hissing. Like growling. I mean, I am on the 23rd floor here, how can anything come up and threaten me? It's crazy. I know that. But there is something there. In my bedroom", my host explains. OK, the client is always king.

I take out my lo pan and take a general read-out on the 24 mountains and the outer 36 dragons. Checking the balcony as main yang chi purveyor. Excellent. In the 1980s they knew how to build condos in Manila.

I talk to her maid, checking for witchcraft (kulam), fishing for resentments against the employer. "Hindi" (nothing), I mumble, "Please show me your bedroom." Doc Sharmaine leads me to her boudoir. Here the vibes are bad, but the compass reveals NO bad direction. A sunny EASTERN bedroom. Perfect. If there weren't those waves of dark gel-o-tinous chi. I tell Doctora to lie down on the bed. "Shit. Definitely not good", she says. "Right. Let's turn the bed around", I recommend. We move the bed across the feminine space several times. No positive results. "Damned, what is going on here? Where is this bad chi coming from?", I wonder. All through our repositioning, Doc Sharmaine's eyes stray towards a red-gold painted commode at the end of the bedroom. The commode faces the window. I go into 'yin-yang-eyes' mode and see slimy black gel-o-tentacles emanating from the artifact: "Got you, baby!" Moving over to the red commode, I am zapped. Again. And again. Like playing 'two-finger-boogie' with the wall socket at age four.

I look back to Doctora. Her breathing is laboured, sweating away with the aircon turned on. Like a hypnotized rabbit, she stares over to the commode. "What is inside that commode?", I inquire. No answer. Then hesitatingly, Doctora walks on leaden feet to the red furniture. Slowly, she unlocks the repository, opens its doors. Like in a trance, she grabs a scroll. Obviously some kind of diploma. I refuse to touch it. It's evil and I don't need a Ph.D. to know that. I ask her: "What is this?" "It is my Reiki-Master diploma from Australia. I never liked the guy who ran the course. He gave me the creeps. That's why I put it away. Here in this place. I completely forgot about it. Until you came along"; Doc Sharmaine enlightens me. "Burn it. Destroy it. After I am gone", I advise her, as I leave the apartment.

24. OUR WHITE LADY OF THE POSO NEGRO

Back on the road again. With Master Wong. We have been picked up at the temple to do a Feng Shui reading in the country. This time we go South of Manila. A call for help from a family, haunted by a white, flowery apparition. Gender: Female. "Oh, please, you must come. Now. We are all scared. The white lady. Yes, yes, it is true. I swear by my Mother's grave. Talaga. Help", the patriarch beseeches us.

Upon arrival at a comfortable home with extended backlot, we sweep for shar chi emanations. No signs of paranormal activities or deviant chi inside the rooms.

After Master Wong has sampled the Filipino cooking, which I missed out on gratefully, we take a walk on the wilde side. The backlot. It is not really a nicely cared for garden. More like a botanical experiment in progress. The temperature drops suddenly all around us. The sky becomes overclouded. A cold wind blows through the shrubbery. "Yin chi emanations", I remark. "Positively so", Master concurs.

The patriarch of the family approaches us and I ask him: "Sir, when exactly do you have apparitions here in the garden lot?" He replies: "Actually the white lady comes out around or after dusk. She is coming from there (points with his finger to the North-Eastern corner of the garden)." Reading out my lo pan reveals demonic activities. Magnetic disturbances spin the needle. I go to the spot the patriarch indicated and find - the septic tank of the house (poso negro).

Further inquiry reveals, that every member of the family had witnessed the appearance of a luminescent female, clad in a white flowering dress. Bubbling up in the darkness from that very spot. Some even say, that this white spook stares at them accusingly, as if they had done something bad to her. "A recurring crepuscular event. The people here are really frightened", I am musing. I continue with my Feng Shui routine. After some time, I come to the conclusion, that the demonic direction NE in association with the twilight and the septic tank, are conducive to generate the phantasms. The combination of the three factors generate some kind of tunnel, which enables the wraith to push trough from the other side.

But something is still nagging at me. Something doesn't add up here. I missed something, I am sure of that. Once again, I go over to the septic spot. Looking for clues. Then it dawns on me: "Water. The missing piece of the puzzle is 'water'. Whenever the septic tank is flooded, either from human waste or from rain at night, the white lady pops up." I turn to the mother: "One question: Do you see the white lady, when the tank is dry like today?" She answers: "No. When I think about it, it's mostly during the rainy season that she scares us." (We have rainy season now). When Master Wong hears about my observations, he instantly embraces its logic and recommends an assortment of lucky charms, to restrain the nocturnal activities of said sad lady. Then it is time to say "good bye" to our hosts. The driver brings us back to Quezon City.

25. BLOOD AND SPIKES

"Boom. Boom. Boom." A knocking at my door at 8 AM. My head is pounding from lack of sleep. I had worked until 4 AM on some technical stuff. "Damned, whoever these people are", I utter with clenched teeth and a dry tongue. Slowly I open my main door and see the nephew of Master Wong. My next door neighbour. He says: "Father, here are some people to see you on urgent business. Very important." "It's always important", I mumble with a tongue, which tastes like old flypaper. I thank my neighbour and dismiss him. He acts sometimes as my 'screener', admitting callers, after they've passed the test.

Still drunken from slumber; I carefully open one eye to see a Chinese couple standing on my doorstep: "Father, you have to help us. My wife here has to undergo surgery tomorrow at St. Luke's. Hysterectomy. But we don't like it. They will cut her up and she isn't a woman anymore. Can you help us?" Opening the other eye, I reply: "I am a psychologist, not a physician. I can help you in spiritual matters. Or Feng Shui. Everything else, you have to look up another specialist." The Chinaman is well known to me. He always comes on to me apprehensive, suspicious, even disapproving of my profession. That he comes down from his self-righteous pedestal, to ask me for help, means only one thing: Big trouble.

Later, I find myself packed into a battered multicab, serving as a delivery van. Zero suspension, zero seats. Now the Chinawoman explains to me: "I am bleeding from my uterus over the past year. It doesn't stop. Every medical treatment failed. Every kind of medicine proved to be useless. My gynaecologist wants to remove all my reproductive organs in one session (total hysterectomy). But my husband and I are scared. I am scheduled for surgery tomorrow morning. Could there be something wrong with our house, perhaps fixing it, would stop the bleeding?" "Smart people, these Hokkienese. They never mentioned it, but they sense that the house is causing the bleeding"; I think to myself.

We alight in front of the couple's residence. One of its first Feng Shui violations are stapled garbage bags, row upon row, leaning against the circumference wall. I go over to the patio and detect an excess of the colour white (metal element). The lady tells me: "We have traded our former home for this one. I took this house from my sister. She insisted, that we swap houses." I ask the lady in return: "Have you been suffering in your old home from any illnesses?" The lady shakes her head: "No. I was never that sick before."

I move up the stairs to the first floor. I want to see the master bedroom, the one in which the lady rests every night. In the moment, I open the door to the bedroom, I am attacked by a strong demonic force. Switching on my third eye, I am able to witness black gel-o-tinous swords slashing and hacking at me. Being attacked, I apply instantaneously the sword mudra and invoke the presence of the Eight Lucky Saints. "I don't have to read out the lo pan for this one", I utter under my breath. Invisible to 'normal eyes', clearly black to my heightened senses, the demon answers my sword gestures with a series of wild flicks. After striking out, I can repel the moves. I shout at the lady standing in the hallway: "Bring some fresh tap water and red flowers from your garden. Now!" The lady runs down the stairs. Meanwhile, the fight with the hellfire-charged entity continues. I draw out three paper charms with invocative formulae from our temple and burn them up in front of the demon. Additionally, I invoke the power of the Great Mother Of Big Dipper 斗母元君, to quell the obnoxious demon.

The Chinese lady has returned to the threshold of her bedroom. She carries with her the items I requested. I move out of the bedroom and take a rest. My hands and body are trembling: "What a way to earn a living. Fighting it out with other people's demons." I take up the bowl with fresh water, dip a bunch of flowers inside and sprinkle the whole bedroom, from floor to ceiling with the purified essence. Howling and growling, standing up against my invocation of Taoist Saints, the black stabber retreats back to its abode in the netherworld. Like air pressures from different worlds

trying to even out. I purify every corner, then take up my bell and ring in the good ethereal beings, inviting benevolent chi 神氣.

Now it is time to check the environment outside of the bedroom. The room itself faces NE, lying in SW. The typical axis of evil spirits. Looking through the big window out into the vicinity, I detect curved iron spikes. Painted black. They are embedded into the neighbor's concrete wall. To discourage robbers, the spikes are encircling the neighbours' property. One side of the wall points with its iron spears right into the heart of my client's bedroom. "There it is. The cause for your bleeding. Which has ruined your health", I declare, "A little longer and it would have cost you your life."

I give strict orders, to keep everybody out of this room. Indefinitely. As long as the neighbour's spears are not removed. "You will sleep tonight in a hotel. Or a room in this house, yet to be determined. For better chi. Burn everything replaceable, like bedsheets, lamps, whatever. Use heavy duty rubber gloves. Don't touch the stuff with your unprotected fingers. Wash your hands under fresh tap water afterwards", I instruct my client. My next step is to find a suitable room in the house. Going through all available spaces, we locate a seldom used fitness-room. Sitting in the EAST. "Very good, use this as a temporary bedroom and report back to me after some days", I say before I leave the formerly haunted house.

One week later, I receive the following message from the lady: "The night I started to sleep in the fitness-room, my bleeding stopped. No more need for surgery. Thank you so much for the good service."

26. THE VIVISECTED VILLA

A warm, humid Sunday. I am holding office at the temple. A family stumbles in. A gentleman from Persia with his Tsinoy girlfriend. The Tsinoy lady has two children from her first marriage with a Persian guy. Mr. Shandy, with whom she lives now together in her gigantic villa in Forbes Park, has straw-blond hair. It looks interesting. He is famous in Malate for his two shawarma-stands, catering to foreigners mostly. Up and on he is on local TV, sampling foods for the audience. I instantly hook up with the man from Persia. He invites me to check out his home this coming week. He promises to pick me up.

Mr. Shandy and I drive to an old, but distinguished part of Makati. It is elevated, impervious to flooding, which is the eternal bane of Manila. Whilst Mr. Shandy drives along, he begins to talk: "You know, the reason why I need your help, is, that something is not right there. I am from Teheran. My mother is old and she lies on her deathbed. I want to visit her, but the Bureau of Immigration does not release my Iranian passport." (After some prayers to the Eight Lucky Saints, we were able to retrieve his passport some weeks later in Intramuros. Mr. Shandy later showed me pictures of his visit to Teheran, his dream fulfilled.)

Mr. Shandy continues his tale: "As I said, I and my live-in, DoDo, don't like the house were we stay at the moment. My live-in had a mother-in-law, born in the year of the snake. The snake-mother was married to a wealthy Hokkienese industrialist, Mr. Gaw. He is my live-in's father. The snake-mother, being Mr. Gaw's second wife, was very sick. She died from cancer. During her decades of withering away, she became pious and devoted her waking hours to extensive Catholic prayer sessions. You will later see every nook and cranny in the villa being filled, with a statuette or holy figurine of Jesus, Mama Mary, Angels and other otherworldly action figures."

"DoDo, my girl-friend, mother of two kids from a former Persian husband, developed recently life-threatening bodily disfunctionalities. The medical establishment at St. Lukes is baffled, and has no recourse to a remedy whatsoever. (Whenever Mde. DoDo gets inseminated by Mr. Shandy, her cardiovascular system crashes, knocking her out. This can happen anytime, anywhere, even whilst strolling through a shopping mall. Every pregnancy has to be terminated, the child aborted.) And if this isn't enough bad news; DoDo is tied up in court with her siblings over estate probation."

I do my routine survey, from the periphery to the centre of the bisected villa. I walk across 'Mama Mary's Grotto-Garden of 100 Blessed Saintes and Saintaises'. Jesus, St. Francis, the Angels, etc. Each figurine is either embedded within the concrete wall, a small cave or positioned on atop a pedestal. Frankly, in bright sunshine this festival of saints could be endured, but on a cloudy day, definitely not. All the assembled Metaphysical action figures represent an accumulation of yin chi. Add to this an oppressive atmosphere, then the yin chi transmorphes into shar chi. And if you have a lot of shar chi, this attracts further sidereal riff-raff, like larvae, silhouettes, schemes, spectres, ghosts and demons.

Next, I make my way to the two main doors. They are sturdy and made from finest nara wood. In front of the doors is a square clear pond 明堂, filled with blackened rain water. Mosquitoes find an excellent breeding ground here, evolving right into the living room. The sala is designed like a Persian serail. The serail serves as the second (smaller) bright hall. Switching on my third eye, I can see black, dark evil vibrancy, bordering on exuberance. Simply: A cesspool of proactive evil, with a cursed (activated) chi collector.

I take out my paper charmes and fire them up in front of the doorstep; facing the pool. Further, I weave Taoist mudras in the air - and push the force of righteousness and justice against the demon in the pond. Actually, I must take care to protect myself from the onslaught. Shielding myself with a golden protective bubble of saintly chi, I am sending out repulsor beams of benevolent chi. Conquering evil with the assistance of heavenly forces. It is a twenty-minute fight, wich leaves me trembling and sweating like a pig. A lot of my life-force has been spent today. It's enough.

[To preempt any objection from my esteemed readers, concerning the 'nobility' of ghosts - yes, there are some. But there are others. And those are not noble and understanding. They are outright evil in a physical way. It is interesting to witness the demise of evil as a valid concept in all world-religions, and the rise of mainstream barbarism, new primitivism and body modifications. Holy men on this planet strive to control and subdue evil and their causative agents (demons). This is called exorcism and is as old as mankind.]

Having banned the lurker on the threshold for now, I continue to make my way through the dark hallways of the unhappy villa. A faint smell of decay and death still lingers, most rooms lie vacant. Decadence. I am shown the sickroom of the snake mother. Hundreds of saintly figurines in all sizes imaginable are stored here. A clearing house for saints. Metaphysically poisoned. Examining the rest of the residence reveals empty, abandoned rooms. As if somebody, who is used to form out mudcakes in a dollhouse, tried his wet hands on creating a palazzo, and achieved only pretentiousness of the petite bourgeois. Pitiful. Not really malicious. Whilst the occupants of the villa dwindled over decades (mirroring eerily the downfall of the Marco's empire), ghosts of better times moved into the vacuum. Yin chi accumulated and opened little vortices into the abyss.

To see the complete villa, I have to walk into another neighbourhood, another street. It constitutes the hidden part of the house, with a garage and a big basketball court. Much better than the dirty pool entrance. This part is rented out for money to other people. I find out, that their medical and financial troubles began, when they divided the residence in two separate units. A mansion, which was once a single living entity, has been cut up and left to bleed. Of life, laughter and hope. Mr. Shandy being unsure, Mde. DoDo very sure, to never let me visit again. I saw too much of too little. I go, close the door and leave them all to heaven.

27. ATTACK OF THE TREE - DEMON

"Hello? Hello? Who is this?", Master Wong is operating the phone, "Yes. Yes. It is I, Holy Man Wong. Holy. Oh. No good. Yes? No good. Perhaps no good? Good. Yes? No good? That's bad. That's bad? No. Yes? Come. Come. Come? No good. W-O-N-G-R-E-V-E-R-E-N-D-F-A-T-H-E-R-O-N-G. Oh. No? Yes. No good. OK. OK. OK.", Master is in full swing today. Maintaining the temple's hot-line. He reveals to me, that we have to go to Fairview. Some kind of emergency. I go into the storage room and retrieve around 70 metal lucky charmes. Heavy duty charmes. Holy lotos and holy gourd. The big guns: Bag-Choc-Full-O-Charmes.

I am leaving the temple street to flag down a taxi on Araneta. Along with the driver I pick up Master. Then we go back to Araneta, from there on to Cubao. It is a long trip. Fairview is built on government employee's salaries. Once being an incentive under Marcos, to create affordable nice little one-row houses for the middle class. Sounds today like a fairytale. After much manoueuvering, with a complete incompetent driver fresh from Mindanao on a 24-hour shift, we arrive at an affluent suburb. In the moment I pay the driver, Master rushes out of the taxi. I never saw him that agile before.

The scene which unfolds before our eyes, could come right out of a horror movie. Separated by a picket fence from the street, a Filipino gardner hacks with a machete at the oozing stem of an old mango-tree. Behind the tree is a house, which develops a new crack in its substance, with every strike against the wailing tree. The wailing is high-pitched, as if the tree is in terrible pain. The more the tree wails, the harder the gardner whips the tree. Torture. In the doorframe stands a middle-aged Chinese lady. The doorframe reveals more and more fresh cuts and cracks. The lady will not meet us, being afraid of the demon of the mango-tree. Understandable attitude.

Master and I want to rush into the garden - but we are repelled by an invisible force field. The mango-arbor now bleeds a black tar, reminiscent of curdled blood. Again we stem our bodies against the force - like leaning into a storm.

No sucess. "Throw the charmes from the bag. Now!", shouts Master at me through the continuous wailing of the wood. He also grabs a hand full and shoots them at the tree. The garden-guy is hit also, and seeks shelter under the doorframe. He is being rejected by the Chinawoman, who is blocking the entrance. Like a trapped animal his bulging eyes go left and right.

All these events unfold in frozen time. Every movement is slowed down, like walking under water. The air is opaque. Like seen through frosted glass. Real magic seeps in from beyond. The atmosphere is dry and cold, different from the one we arrived in. Master and I continue to throw metal charmes at the tree. Slowly the force field retracts itself back into the plant. The haunting wailing subsides. Now we can enter the garden. The Chinawoman meets us halfway from the door. She is agitated, red in the face, and very, very angry with her day-labourer: "I've told that idiot definitely not to touch the mango-tree. I was afraid that this would happen. That's why I called you, Holy Man Wong. But this son-of-a-bitch disobeyed my orders. Now we have this mess." With her manicured finger she points to the cracks in the front of the building : "Who will pay for this?"

The lady invites us into her comfortable home, where the damage is also visible. Master Wong explains to her what happened: "Madame, you have angered a very powerful kapre (tree-demon). It was good, that we came at the right moment. Otherwise, your house might have turned to rubble by now. Here. Take these remaining charmes and bury them at the roots of the wood. Then tape this paper charme from our temple to the stem. We will bless now the house, garden and tree. And clanging our bells, we tell the demon to return to root-world." After the demon returns to his abode, we ring in the new benevolent powers of the Eight Lucky Saints. Peace and calm settle over the garden. The lady is so pleased with our spiritual services, that she gives us several free dinners at her chain of restaurants.

28. HAPPY BONES AND MARIACHI

I have now an office in Chinatown. Just a hole in the wall. A rat-infested cubicle, opposite a mouldy storage room for porcelain figurines. A transfer has taken place: My student, an old guy called Brother Sony, is now the leading Taoist expert in the temple. He is doing horoscopes without my knowledge. Being tossed onto the scrapheap, here in this mini-office by Master and his close companion, Ms. Rose (and I didn't see it coming). I like my life. It's great. I have to commute now on my own money from Araneta to Chinatown. My landlord - a Chinese merchant from Hokkien called Ong - doesn't even know how to clean the altar of the House God 土地公. He can only sell them downstairs. So I clean up his house altar every morning. The gwailo cleans the Chinaman's altar of the House God. Making the joss-stick prayers. My new Master, also a Mr. Ong, sells paper money, lucky charms and figurines. And finger rings. He likes to play with finger rings. So cute. Whereas I wait upstairs for clients. Because I am not allowed by Master Wong to conduct Feng Shui readings. It is expected of me, to send all inquiring clients to the temple in Quezon City. No income for me there.

At night, my landlord enjoys the feminine pleasures of Filipino boys. Creamy sperm and soft brown skin. Chocolate tinkies. His Filipina wife has recently given birth to a baby daughter. After a while, my landlord is found dead, having expurged his last drop of semen during kinky games, gone a little bit too far, a little bit too rough. Boys and wallet gone. Looking up a new sugar daddy from the influx of the Mainland.

One afternoon in my inner sanctum, Mde. Cythera and her live-in adjuvant consult me. She is the mistress, he the servant. I calculate their horoscopes and they are so speechless, that they forget to give me any feedback about my fortunetelling. I don't encounter this bizarre couple again.

Then, one morning, they are back onatop the paper money shop. More friendly now, they start chattering away. Then they invite me for dinner. Over Hokkien-Filipino-style seafood they tell me a sad story.

Madame, and her lover cum driver Toxy, are very concerned about the grave of Madame's father. They ask me, if I could join them tomorrow, doing a Yin Feng Shui survey in old Fort Bonifacio. This trip will bring me to the cemetery dwellers of Manila. A city of the dead, amongst stacked grave slots. Whole families live here amongst the tombs, piled up like shipping containers. Each slot can take up one small coffin, or a corpse enwrapped in his/her finest Sunday clothes. The slot is then sealed with a concrete name plate. The five year lease is still valid for the slot of Madame's tatay (father). Others are not so lucky. After the time allotted has expired, the slot is opened by the caretaker and bone collector. Whilst the material remains are brought for intermediary safekeeping into the bone-house, another family cleans already up and shoves a fresh corpse into the slot. Time is precious in the city of the grave dwellers and a humidity of 90%. 'Corpse-flavour' sticks to your clothes, to your skin, to your nose. You scrub yourself for one hour, useless. You don't get rid of that greasy, fetid aroma.

As I take several readings with my lo pan, I step consecutively into piles of fresh vomit, shit, goat's droppings, and used condoms (onatop the grave slots). "The kids. The poor kids. Yeah, they can not have sex at home. So they do it onatop their dead relatives. Isn't that touching, Father?", the caretaker seeks my absolution. I don't have anything to dispense. Especially that I have recently run out of it. Finishing up my calculations, I declare (whilst a stray dog urinates near my left shoe): "If you want to turn your luck around, you have to bury your father in a better place. What I can do for now, is, to calculate the exhumation date of the skeleton and the transfer time to another burial ground."

And that is what we do. We drive to Malate to buy a giant flower pot made of clay. With the corresponding cover. This will serve as an urn for the transport of the bones of Madame's father. A few days later, she tells me: "I have purchased a lot in a nice cemetery direct at the beach. It is the

native village of my father. A remote island in Quezon province."

On the calculated auspicious day, we have appointed the bone collector of the sex-cemetery. In the early morning, the crypt keeper opens up the grave slot. Whilst he cleans up the dark brown bones, I start to pray and invoke the blessings of the saints. The crypt keeper keeps the front concrete plate, with the name and data of the deceased, intact. Subject to be inserted later into the new tomb on the island. In the moment, the bones in the order of 'feet - torso - head' are safely sealed inside the urn, the pot starts to vibrate. A radiant aura develops around the new 'bone home' for the bonhomme. Switching on my third eye, I can reveal to Madame and her adjuvant, that her tatay is happy over the recent activities. The happier his soul (still attached to the bones), the merrier the golden aura expands in front of us.

We are now driving in a comfortable van from Manila to Atimonan in Quezon province. The moment we hit the road, the radio dial sets itself to mariachi and salsa music. This kind of music is not available in the Philippines - surprisingly - considering the Spanish colonial history of this country. The peppy sound and spanish lyrics are indicative of L.A. and Miami, but not Manila. I ask the servile manservantdriver: "What radio station is this?" He shrugs his shoulders: "I don't know. It's definitely not a Filipino broadcaster. That's for sure." And: Tatay in his urn begins to 'breathe' in the rhythm of the festival bands, blasting from the radio. An amazing thing. A miracle. Now Madame herself and the adjuvant feel it also: It seems, a fourth passenger has joined our party - tatay!

In front of us looms Quezon National Forest Park. The adjuvant drives up the dangerous serpentine of the 'bitukang manok (chicken innards)', which cut right through the park. This curving road is known to be haunted by mischievous sprites and goblins. The lush virgin forest is beset with colorful tropical flowers, which glitter like gems in the noon rainshower. Finger-thick leeches wait to suck you dry. If there is some blood left over - after the mosquitoes have taken their fill. Car accidents abound on this winding part of the highway. Occasionally a crashed van or minicab can be seen, down in the foliage. The old expanded trees turn on a perpetual twilight. Monkeys enjoy to jump the approaching cars, begging for peanuts and bananas. We throw coins through the open windows. Into the jungle, to placate the evil spirits and impetuous sprites. It never fails.

In the afternoon, we finally reach Atimonan port. Our banca to the native island is leaving within the hour. Toxy, the adjuvant, brings the van into the compound. Madame hires two boys who bring forth the urn into the waiting outrigger-boat. I tell her to keep quiet about the radiating content, otherwise the captain will reject our party to the island. The weather is sunny, fresh and cool here at the sea. Then we set off, motoring into the calm waters. Families, lolas and lolos, sexy chicks and chicken have settled on the rough benches. The diesel engine is a bitch, but the inhenyeria (engineer) gets her going with mulish repetitiveness. Exhaust fumes, salt and iodine waft through the primitive construction. I refuse to think about possible catastrophes out on open waters. And: We have the beaming urn with us. Our talisman.

Four hours later, we have anchored at our destination. We need a cart to transport the urn. It takes an hour, and then a wooden dray for delivering hogs appears in front of the boat. Now the captain finds out, that we have transported a dead man in his boat. He is furious and accuses us of having pulled a fast one on him. He is right. But if we had told him, he had refused to carry us on to the island. We place the urn into a nest of nipa straw, the brother of Madame now pushing the hoggie wheelbarrow. Meanwhile dogs and kids have appeared out of nowhere. A stray dog sniffs around the lid of the clay pot and is hit in return by a pious soul.

Tomorrow morning we will conduct the reburial at the seaside cemetery. Thus we need a storage place over night, for the radiating tatay. I recommend the nearest Catholic church, which turns out to be the only one on coconut-island. Madame runs off to meet up with the residing Padre therein. The Padre will not talk to me. He is offended, that his 'old friend tatay' is brought here by a heathen 'Feng Shui man'. I feel not offended, being neither a 'pagan' nor a 'Feng Shui man'. Alas,

Padre turns out to be an understanding one (after a hefty donation to the church by Madame), and tatay is now permitted to rest over night inside the church. True Catholics stay together - Pray together. Even when encapsulated. The family of Madame promises to hold vigil over the clay pot.

I brought six double-cheeseburgers from Manila. And some bottled water and energy-drinks. I am fine for tonight and retire in someone's house. They have an electric fan, for which I am grateful. Madame and her adjuvant are with the family of her brother. He is a carpentero with 16 family members, living together in one nipa bahay (straw hut). At night they all huddle together. Back to back. Like rabbits.

Early next morning sees a strange procession. Proceeding from the church, I am in front wearing my purple Taoist vestment for burials. I hold a bell in my hand, to bless the march of the radiating urn. Beside me walks Madame, carrying a jar with coins and ghost money. Pacifiers to thwart demon attacks from the earth, not to touch the remains of her beloved father. I reach occasionally into the jar and throw coins into the shrubbery along the wayside. Delighted children pick them up instantly, something they've never seen nor will see, ever. The beamer urn is pushed forward by the senior kuya (brother) of the family.

Our burial march ends at the sea shore. In front of us the ocean. Coconut shells lie abandoned for the goats to consume. The local graveyard turns out to be converted farmland. Basically a meadow at the sea, home to several coconut palms. Carabaos (water buffalos) like it here. The food is good. The plots for the internment of the dead have a beautiful outlook on the Lord's creation. Indeed: A fine lot for resting in eternity.

The tomb is already built. It is no big improvement over the rental slot in the city of the dead. A raised concrete platform with the same size cement burial container. The container holds the treasured items of the deceased, like glasses, shirt and trousers. The Filipinos who have gathered to witness the spectacle are chattering and noisy. I step up to the concrete pedestal and address the assembly, neighbours and gawkers. I explain to them, that this is the way of the Chinese, the way they bury their dead. Little by little they comprehend, what is going on here, quiet down. More respectful now. They are children in the guise of middle aged men and women.

I pray for the deceased tatay and bless his earthly remains. I feel, that he is happy. Finally back home in the province. Watching from his vantage point on the meadow, as the stars light up over the ocean.

It was good. Mission 'urn return' accomplished. We take the next banca back to Atimonan harbour. The clouds are spun cotton, the sun gentle. A picture taken from an anime. Seagulls cry, birds twitter in their own language: 'It's good to be alive.' Toxy retrieves our car from the compound and we take the same scenic route back to Manila. Mariachi and salsa firing our engine to the suburbs of the Metropolis. There the radio fizzles out, the salsa extinguished. Stale and sober. Never to be heard again.

29. DEEP END

I know that my whole existence is about to end. Being threatened by evil forces. I know, that I don't have much time left on this plane(t). I see the signs. They are obvious. Meaning: I will be killed. Soon. The stars of Taoism never lie.

Let me explain this 'wipe out' in detail. It all begins, with my stars forecasted in a special Taoist system. The verdict is 'execution ground' for 2009. The portent of this star god, is the extermination of an honored official of the Empire for 'treason'. Another bad omen appears in the form of a dead tree at the right side of the temple entrance, near the paper money burner. The tree has been trimmed recently and its black naked trunk sticks out, like a beacon of pending disaster. Its location is SW facing NE.

Pointing in a straight line to cursed new condominium towers, set up in Santa Mesa. In my seminars, I have repeatedly discouraged my students to buy one of those expensive condos. They are designed for rich kids who study in the vicinity. Skipping all the details: The Feng Shui there is extremely bad. Along the towers runs the LRT-2 line connecting Binondo with Cubao, which amplifies the yin chi of the NE positioned condo towers. The swimming pool in front of the towers is also in the direction of NE, another shar chi multiplier. If I have ever identified a nexus of evil forces, linking up to each other - it is here in St. Mesa. The main door of my apartment behind the temple faces SW, sitting in the NE. A perfect line to the condo tower in the 'kanto ng demonio' style. There are no coincidences in life.

It is September 26, 2009. Noontime. I have just finished my lunch, when I perceive a small stream of dirty water, being pressed through the door frame. Like a cat presenting its dead mouse for approval. I am stunned. Now for the first time, I notice how quiet it is. No dogs barking. No children playing. More water, seeping along the window frames into my apartment. Next the liquid goo - consisting of rain water refuse, piss, excrements, machine oil, gasoline, toxic chemicals and fine sand, makes its way slowly into my home.

The water level rises. I measure 10 cm per minute. Time is running out. Still I can not comprehend, what is going on. Then a terrible thought crosses my mind: "My scriptures. My books. My manuscripts. My opera CD collection. My personal documents." I switch my body into overdrive. Later I can not fathom, how I achieved the impossible. My furniture is made of heavy wood. Now my tables, chairs, boards are floating on the piss waters. In order to save my Taoist scriptures, I have to reach the kitchen cabinet. In order to reach the kitchen cabinet, I have to step on the chair. The chair is toppled over, swimming around. I pick up my scriptures, step with the right foot onto the chair. Balancing. Holding it down. With my left foot, I step onto the kitchen sink. In my hands, I balance the scriptures, putting them on top of the kitchen sink. I do this for some time. Saving whatever papers I have, out of reach of the contaminating waters.

The water level inside my apartment (which is above the plain street) still rises. It has reached meanwhile 1.85 metres. I feel that my time is running out. I want to open the door. No use. Whilst I have deposited my scriptures for safekeeping, the waters have gelled the wood of my door. I try the windows. They don't open. The water presses from the outside against windows and door. I panic. I imagine to drown in piss. Then, I can not express it any other way, heaven intervenes and I am able to move the door. First 1 cm off its position. Then 2 cm. Then 3, 4, 5 cm. Reluctantly the door yields, giving me enough space to slip through. Into freedom. Just carrying my personal documents in a water resistant plastic envelope. I've lost most of my worldly possessions. But I survived. I am grateful for that. An experience like this, brings you nearer to God, or removes you farther from Him. But it always leaves you a changed person. You are not the same anymore. Never will be.

GLOSSARY

ALBULARYO - Folk - herbalist
AGUA DE MAYO - First rain water in May, which serves as a lucky charme
AKAYIN SA KASAMAAN - Pervert
ANITO - Fairy, spirit
ATE - Sister
ASWANG - A necrophiliac sucker monstre, which probes with its long, hollow tube tongue into the uterus and sucks the fresh blood of the fetus
BABAE - Woman
BAHAY - House, mostly a lowland stilted primitive hut
BAKLA - Homosexual, cross - dresser, drag - queen
BALETE TREE - A strangulating fig tree. The plant jumps as a seedling unto other trees, wraps itself around them and finally suffocates its host.
BINALAKI - Lesbian
BRUHA - Witch, shapechanger
BRUHO - Warlock, shapechanger
CHI - Life Force
CUSINA - Street kitchen
DAYUHAN - Foreigner
DIWATA - Fairy, Spirit
DUENDE - Elfs, Leprechauns, Fairies
ENGKANTADA - Elemental spirit
FLORES DE MAYO - Young teens parading at the barrio fiesta in May
GABAA - Negative karma, retribution
GWAILO - Cantonese for 'white (foreign) devil', mostly used amongst Hokkienese/Cantonese
HILOT - Filipino Folk Healer (naturopath)
IGOROT - The proud highlander tribes of the Cordillera region
JEEPNEY - Customized, stretched long Filipino jeep for public transportation
KAPRE - Tree - demon, tall, invisible, sticky gooey appearance, lives in acaciaes, mangoe trees
KULAM - Folk - witchcraft
KULAMIN - Blessing or cursing with the the help of baja magica/primitive magic
LALAKE - Man
LOLA - Grandmother
LOLO - Grandfather
LO PAN - Handmade Feng Shui Compass
MAGICA DE MAYO - Highest supernatural activities of the whole year (after Easter)
MAMBABARANG - Summoner who uses vodou bugs
MANANANGGALS- Were - animals/humans/bloodsuckers
MANGKUKULAM - Witch - doctor using a voodoo poppet
MULTO - Ghost, spirit of a dead person to clean up unfinished business
NAKAKAGIGIL NA - (You are) grinding upon my nerves
NANAY - Mother
NIPA - Leaves of the nipa palm, to thatch the roof of a bahay kubo/hut
NAKULAM - Victim, suffering from witchcraft
PASATSAT - Ghosts of WW II, not given last rites
POKPOK - Prostitute
PUTANG INA MO - Your mother is a dirty bitch, used to pick a fight with a foreigner
SALA - Living room
SARIMANOK - Happy rooster, catch it and luck it
SHAR CHI - Cutting/Cursed Chi

SIRENA - Mermaid, luring tourists to death

SUMPA - Curse

TATAY - Father

TIYANAK - Aborted fetus, not being baptized, residing in hell, spawn of demon & woman

UNGLU - Vampire

UNGO - Monstre

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Winkie Kau Sai Chau.

THIS BOOK

ENCOUNTERS WITH THE PARANORMAL. For the first time, Fr.Axel reveals his memoirs. These are the adventures of a Western Psychologist, who abandons his former life in search of an authentic Taoist Master in Asia. The book explores the struggles, hardships and sacrifices of a true Taoist adept. Fr.Axel finally finds his destination in the person of a mysterious Taoist Ritual Master in Southeast Asia. Being accepted as a closed-door-student, the author tells us about his shocking encounters with different Supernatural Beings. Later, Fr.Axel accompanies the Master on his travels in the inscrutable East, helping people with Feng Shui and Taoist Blessings: "During the rainy season, I walk behind the Master, holding an umbrella over his head. The Master always arrives dry and in style, I in the guise of a wet dog."

ABOUT FR.AXEL

Fr.Axel is a Taoist Master in the II. Generation.

He works as a board-certified Pastoral Counselor (US). At the moment he is being busy, catering to his demanding clientele with Taoist Sciences (like Feng Shui and Astrology). He is an avid fan of Italian Opera and Wagner.



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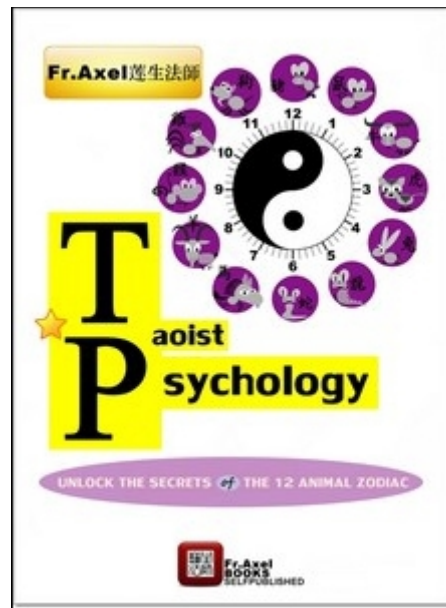
CONSULTATIONS

Fr.Axel can be consulted for Feng Shui assessments regarding office, home and graveyards. He also calculates personal, family and workplace horoscopes, based on the 4 Pillars of Destiny and beyond. Fr.Axel always applies horoscope details, whilst surveying the Feng Shui of a certain place: "There is no difference between time & space in Taoist Sciences. Both make up a continuum, which has to be understood in full, before giving out recommendations."

IF YOU LIKE

this book, then please mention it somewhere. Thank you for that. May the TAO be with you !

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